

# *Special Supplement on Gay and Lesbian Films*

## Angry Community Fights Foster Parent Policy

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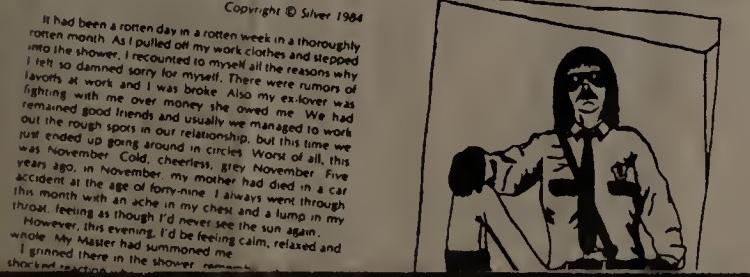
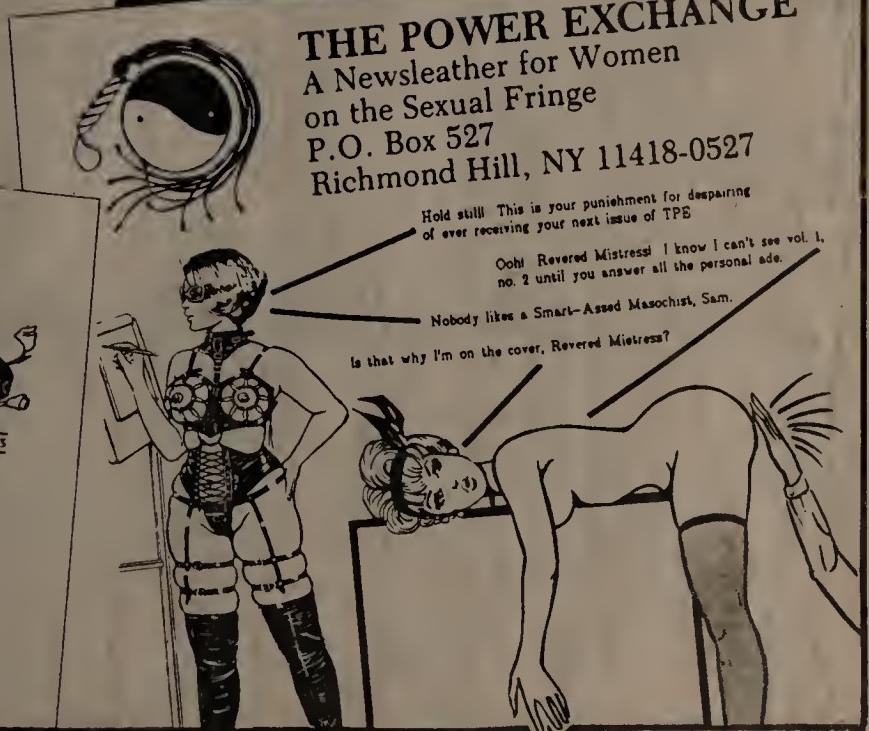
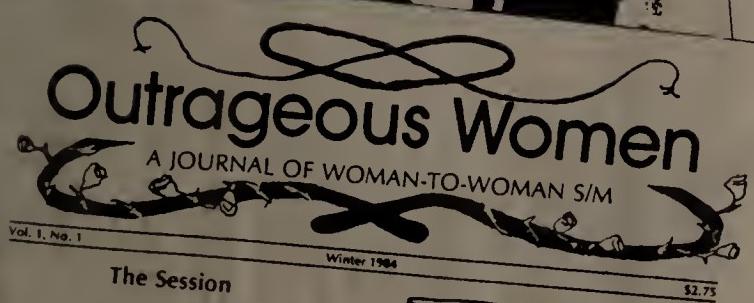
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# GayCommunity News

THE WEEKLY FOR LESBIANS AND GAY MALES

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## Lesbian Sex Magazines Rejected by Women's Bookstores





# GayCommunityNews

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2500 demonstrate

## Outrage Grows against Gay Foster Policy

By Christine Guilfoy

BOSTON — Over 2500 angry lesbians and gay men participated in a hastily organized march and rally protesting a new governmental policy which virtually prohibits gay people from becoming foster parents. The May 29 event was organized by the newly formed Gay and Lesbian Defense Committee which has also announced

ing a non-binding resolution, similar to the budget rider passed overwhelmingly in the state House of Representatives. The resolution would express the sense of the Senate that gay people should not be eligible as foster parents.

The Senate debated the resolution on May 28 before a gallery packed with lesbians and gay men,



Ellen Shub

**Protesters march from Boston City Hall Plaza to State House.**

two upcoming community meetings: Monday June 3 at Harvard Divinity School, Cambridge, and Wednesday June 5 at the Jackson-Mann School, Allston. Both meetings will begin at 7:30 p.m. to plan further responses to what many believe is the most significant political event since Anita Bryant brought her crusade to this city almost seven years ago.

The events, which have helped reunite the lesbian and gay community here, began when the Boston *Globe* published an article about two gay men, Donald Babets and David Jean, who were caring for two foster children. Amid a storm of publicity, the children were summarily removed from the home as a public outcry arose over the appropriateness of gay people acting as foster parents. As a result, Secretary of Human Services Philip Johnston — on orders from Governor Michael Dukakis — undertook to review the Department of Social Services policy for foster care placement.

Announcing the results of his policy review at a press conference on May 24, Johnston said, "[T]his administration believes that foster children are served best when placed in traditional family settings — that is, with relatives or in families with married couples, preferably with parenting experience and with time available to care for foster children."

"In exceptional circumstances it may be necessary to place a child in a non-traditional home — that is, with an unmarried couple or with a single person. Any such placement will henceforth require the prior approval of the Commissioner."

DSS Commissioner Marie Matava has stated publicly that the new policy makes gay foster parenthood "highly unlikely."

Following the announcement, a press conference organized by the newly formed Gay and Lesbian Defense Committee was held on the steps of the Statehouse on May 27, Memorial Day.

In addition, over 75 community members gathered on the steps of the Statehouse on a rainy day, May 28, to lobby their state senators. The Senate is consider-

and it is expected to come to a vote soon. The Senate, which is more conservative than the House, is expected to pass the resolution.

On May 29, the Joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs held a public hearing which featured a three-hour grilling of DSS commissioner Marie Matava. Questions probed details of the Babets/Jean case, current policy as announced by Johnston and the rationale for the change in policy. The legislators also sought to determine the extent of available foster homes.

The rally of May 29 featured speakers, musicians and a march from city hall plaza to the nearby Statehouse. The theme was, "Don't let the state define our families." The following are accounts of some of those events.

**Actions in the House and Senate**  
The state House of Representatives attached a rider to the DSS central office budget on May 23 which would prohibit DSS from placing children in gay foster homes.

An attempt to derail the amendment was made by Representative Joseph DeNucci (D-Newton) who at first attempted to refer the matter back to DSS. When that failed, DeNucci and the author of the amendment, Royall Switzler (R-Wellesley), reached a compromise which specifically exempts any instances which involve biological children. The amendment passed by an overwhelming 112-28 vote.

Those who were present during the debate on the amendment said the atmosphere was highly charged. Peg Lorenz, the lobbyist for the Massachusetts Gay Political Caucus told the press that supportive legislators were unprepared for Switzler's action.

In order for the amendment to become law, it would have to be approved by both houses. Thus far, the Senate has made no attempt to introduce a binding measure of its own. However, because the House amendment appears in the budget, an agreement on its fate will have to be reached by a joint conference committee. As of yet, the Senate

has not taken up budget deliberations but is expected to do so soon, as budget work should be completed by the beginning of the new fiscal year which starts July 1.

Should both houses pass the amendment, it would be in effect as law for the life of the budget, one year, although it could conceivably be renewed each year.

Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) is considering a challenge to the amendment, should it become law. A GLAD press release of May 24 states, "The amendment to the Human Services Budget passed by the Massachusetts House of Representatives on May 23, 1985, seeking to bar foster care placements, adoptions, and awards of guardianship to lesbians and gay men violates the Equal Protection and Due Process clauses of the United States and Massachusetts Constitutions as well as the Best Interest of the Child standard required under Massachusetts law for decisions concerning child custody."

GLAD attorneys are meeting on May 30 to consider responses.

Jim Dorsey, a spokesperson for Dukakis, told *GCN* that the governor's legal advisors "felt there are statutory problems with it [and it is] contrary to certain case law." He said the legal research will continue but he could not say what Dukakis will do if it does reach his desk. "We can't thumb our noses at what the House has done, either," he said.

### Announcement of DSS Policy

Following two weeks of meetings with gay and lesbian community groups, child welfare organizations and individual workers, and after exploring existing policies in other states, Johnston announced his policy on May 24.

When Johnston announced the new policy, many community members were caught off guard. Rosemary Dunn-Dalton, the

chairperson of the Boston Lesbian and Gay Political Alliance (BLGPA), told *GCN* that Johnston had led her to believe his position was quite different only two days before his announcement. Vin McCarthy, a gay attorney and candidate for U.S. Congress, agreed, telling *GCN*, "I think the policy was tolerable Thursday night. It changed a lot [that] night because of the governor — he's calling the shots."

When asked by *GCN* what clinical and research data Johnston used in the development of policy, his spokesperson, Mary Breslauer, told *GCN* that he relied on input from clinicians who agree that a "traditional" family is the most suitable placement. She also said a

Ellen Shub  
Demonstrators at May 29 rally, Boston City Hall Plaza.

America, the Massachusetts Psychological association, Massachusetts Psychiatry Society, as well as individual caseworkers from DSS, Department of Youth Services, the Department of Mental Health and the Office for Children.

Breslauer added that Johnston did not specifically prohibit gay foster parenting.

At a May 27 press conference organized by the Defense Committee, several community members criticized the policy and the process by which it was developed.

Cathy Hoffman, a spokesperson for the Defense Committee, told the assembled reporters, "We challenge Johnston to show us

research that says we can't be good parents."

And Cindy Rizzo, a GLAD cooperating attorney, said, "We have gotten myths from the governor and Johnston." Rizzo told reporters she gave Johnston "three inches of clinical studies" which indicate there is no difference between children raised in gay and heterosexual homes. Referring to the fact that

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## 10,000 Join AIDS Vigil

By Marcos Bistcas-Cocoves

SAN FRANCISCO — An estimated 10,000 people gathered here on March 27 to commemorate those who have died from AIDS as part of the National AIDS Vigil. The Memorial Day action, organized by Mobilization Against AIDS in conjunction with local groups, drew people in 20 cities across the United States, Canada and England, including 300 people in Boston.

The San Francisco-based Mobilization Against AIDS is a six-month-old national non-partisan membership organization dedicated to "securing an adequate response to the AIDS crisis," according to Paul Boneberg, Mobilization Coordinator. Boneberg said, "Our position is that the government's lack of response to the AIDS crisis amounts to criminal negligence." In an effort to combat this negligence, Mobilization will be organizing other actions similar to the vigils, as well as more direct confrontational actions.

Organization for the vigil was coordinated by the People with

AIDS Caucus of Mobilization which wanted a primarily memorial, non-political service.

In San Francisco, approximately 10,000 people marched with candles from the Castro down Market Street to City Hall. A memorial service drawing 5,000 people was then held at the United Nations Plaza. Boneberg said the people could be seen down the length of Market Street from City Hall to the Castro. As part of the memorial service afterwards clergy read out the names of those who had died from AIDS and the crowd responded by shouting, "We remember."

Congregation Tikvah Chadash opened a 24-hour vigil in Seattle's predominantly gay Capitol Hill district. The vigil, sponsored by Seattle's AIDS Action Committee, was held from noon on the 26th to noon on the 27th, and eventually drew 600-700 people. The vigil culminated on the 27th with a 45-minute program including an open mike.

The Citizens for Human Equality (CHE) and the KS/AIDS

Foundation sponsored the Houston, Texas memorial vigil. Approximately 350 people gathered on the steps of Houston City Hall and heard representatives of the sponsors and the clergy speak. Finally, as in San Francisco, the names of 130 of the dead were recited as candles were lit.

The vigil in Jackson, Mississippi, involved between 35 and 50 people and was locally sponsored by the Mississippi Gay Alliance and the local Metropolitan Community Church (MCC). The service, held in a local park, was accompanied by people marching around the park's perimeter, holding signs with the names of people who had died from AIDS.

Over 1,000 people gathered for a memorial service at Chicago's Good Shepherd Parish of the MCC, and 700 of these went on to march through the adjacent New Town area.

A crowd of between 200-300 eventually swelled to over 1200 in New York City's Greenwich

*continued on page 6*

# News Notes

## quote of the week

"Those who yell discrimination apparently have a double standard when it comes to Anita Bryant."

Anita Bryant, responding to losing her job as a celebrity reporter for an Atlanta TV station after just one appearance. Station officials at WAGA said Bryant, who headed a national anti-gay and lesbian campaign in the '70s, was let go because of a huge outpouring of negative reaction.

## new world women

NEW YORK — "A Movement of New World Women," a series of events by and about Women of Color will be presented by the Women of Color Caucus of New York Women Against Rape June 7-9 and June 14-15.

Workshops will examine how various forms of violence affect particular ethnic/cultural groups, including: Afro-American/Caribbean, Asian/Pacific, indigenous/Native American, Latin American and United States Latina Women.

A keynote event is planned for Friday, June 7, from 6-9:30 p.m. at the Harlem State Office Building, P.S. 125, 40 Division Street. Safiya Bandele, Sandra Camacho, Cindy Chin, Eileen Hudon, and Cherrie Moraga will speak as representatives of the various ethnic/cultural groups.

On the evening of June 15, a gala cultural event and cultural fair will occur, including performances by Narratives Performing Co., Sapphire, Jessica Hagedorn, Tahavika with Chea Villanueva, Susan Yung, Cherrie Moraga, Sandra Maria-Esteves, Afro-Caribbean music, and Native American performers.

Tickets will be \$7.00 and can be purchased at the door. The cultural event and fair are open to the public.

For more information about the series and cultural event contact NYWAR, 477-0819.

## lesbian moms

SAN FRANCISCO — Wages Due Lesbians of San Francisco held their third annual Lesbian Mother's Day in the Park on May 12. A multi-racial crowd of over 150 women and their children gathered in Golden Gate Park to celebrate, and to discuss issues including: surviving on low incomes, fighting ex-spouses and family members over custody of their children, childcare, co-parenting, and childbirth options.

## free at last

BOSTON — All charges have been dismissed against the 569 protesters arrested here on May 7 for occupying the John F. Kennedy (JFK) Federal Building. The arrested, members of the local branch of the national Pledge of Resistance, were protesting the United States trade embargo of Nicaragua which went into effect that day (see GCN vol. 12, no. 43).

On May 30, Magistrates Robert B. Collings and Lawrence P. Cohen granted United States Attorney William P. Weld leave to dismiss charges against the JFK 569. The reasons for dropping the charges as given in the dismissal are: "[T]he United States notes that its interest in enforcing the appropriate building regulations and insuring free and unimpeded access to the John F. Kennedy Federal Building has been vindicated. Weighing this against the burden any further prosecution would impose on the resources of the Court and the government, the United States believes that dismissal is in the interests of justice." Richard Stearns, Chief of the Criminal Division of the U.S. Attorney's Office, told GCN that the government's action represents the resolution of this particular incident and not a general policy to be applied to future actions.

In a related action, the National Signal Group of the Pledge of Resistance announced in a May 24 memo that should Congress pass aid to the Nicaraguan contras on June 5, the signatories of the Pledge will be called to action on June 12. According to the memo, this would entail "both nationally-coordinated legal protest and non-violent civil disobedience at Congressional field offices."

## monument to lesbians/gay men killed in concentration camps

HAMBURG, West Germany — The first monument dedicated solely to the gay men and lesbians killed in Nazi concentration camps was unveiled here May 12, according to a United Press International report in the Washington *Blade*. Made of pink granite, the monument was placed at the site of the Neuengamme concentration camp by a group called the Independent Alternative Homosexuals. It bears the inscription, "Dedicated to the Homosexual Victims of National Socialism. 1985." Approximately 150 people attended the dedication ceremony.

It is believed that between 250,000 and 500,000 gay men and lesbians died in Nazi concentration camps.

## experimental aids drug approved

WASHINGTON, DC — The Food and Drug Administration has approved distribution of the experimental drug Isoprinosine to people with AIDS whose doctors request it, according to the New York *Times*. The company given permission to distribute the drug has not yet agreed to the plan, however.

In an internal advisory, the FDA said it agreed to let Newport Pharmaceuticals of California sell the drug at cost under a "compassionate-use protocol."

However, Newport manager of regulatory affairs Cynthia Renger said, "We haven't finished our negotiations (with the FDA)" and added that the company doubted it could handle broad distribution of the drug.

The FDA issued the advisory after news reports that people with AIDS were buying the drug from U.S. black market dealers or in Mexico where it is sold legally by a Newport licensee, Laboratorios Sanfer Co.

Scientists believe Isoprinosine, one of about a half-dozen drugs beginning clinical trials, may be useful in stimulating the immune system.

The drug is legally available in 70 countries.

## parsons and buck

COLUMBIA, SC — Two women have been sentenced to three years in prison for perjury for testimony that they were not lesbians in a libel suit against Sports Illustrated magazine, according to *Just Out*. However, a U.S. District Court judge suspended all but four months of their sentences.

Pam Parsons, a former women's basketball coach at the University of South Carolina, sued Sports Illustrated for \$75 million after the magazine alleged Parsons had resigned following the discovery that she and Tina Buck were having an affair. Buck was a U.S.C. basketball player.

Parsons and Buck testified they were not lovers or lesbians, but attorneys for the magazine introduced testimony from a disc jockey at a Salt Lake City lesbian bar who said she saw the women kissing and dancing in the bar several times in the summer of 1983.

A jury found the magazine not guilty of libel in May 1984 and a perjury investigation was ordered by U.S. District Court Judge Clyde Hamilton. Parsons and Buck pleaded guilty to perjury charges in November.

News Notes compiled by Stephanie Poggi

# Mother with AIDS Prompts School Policy

By Michael Schwartz

CAMBRIDGE, MA — Spurred by the possibility of a public panic over the AIDS-related death of a mother of a school child, Cambridge school and health officials recently adopted guidelines concerning children with AIDS. The officials also took measures toward educating parents and school staff about AIDS. The guidelines and the public education have been credited with preventing panic, but have also drawn some criticism.

The guidelines, based on guidelines already adopted in Florida and Connecticut and being considered in Boston, permit children with AIDS, AIDS-Related Complex (ARC), or HTLV-III-positive tests to remain in school, except in extreme circumstances. They also call for education of school staff and parents.

Criticism centers on a letter, sent by Cambridge School Superintendent Robert Peterkin to all parents of school children, which reassures the public but also spreads what gay and lesbian activists see as misinformation about AIDS. Critics also point to severe shortcomings in the guidelines' plans for public education.

The process began on Wednesday, May 1, according to Albert Giroux, public information officer for the Cambridge school system, when a parent told a teacher about a rumor that someone in the school had died of AIDS. School officials contacted the Cambridge Health Department, which corrected the rumor, saying that the mother of a Cambridge school child had died of an AIDS-related disease. Three other children, all attending different schools, also lived in the same household. Further details, including the mother's name, the

names of the four children, and the schools they attended, have not been made public.

On Friday, May 3, school officials met with Commissioner of Health Dr. Melvin Chalfen, Dr. David Link, chief of pediatrics at Cambridge City Hospital, and Dr. Bridget Hanson, a pediatrician who is also the responsible physician for school health delivery in the Cambridge school system. According to Giroux, Link stressed that AIDS is not transmitted by casual contact and that the presence of children with AIDS would not be a threat to others.

At the meeting, Hanson also pointed out that Florida and Connecticut, the only states having guidelines, did not exclude students with AIDS from the classroom. When complaints from other parents caused students with AIDS to be removed, the courts ordered the students returned to the classroom.

On Friday afternoon, the staff at the school where the rumor began requested a meeting, where Link spoke at length about the medical facts. The school nurse helped allay fears by mentioning the story, which had appeared in the *Globe*, about a male nurse with AIDS who was permitted to continue work at Boston's Beth Israel Hospital.

Superintendent Peterkin and Link held a press conference late Friday afternoon carried live by two local television stations. They announced the death of the mother but said that there was no medical danger to other school children.

All staff members in Cambridge schools received a letter from Superintendent Peterkin, a letter from Health Commissioner Chalfen, and the eight proposed guidelines concerning children

with AIDS.

When asked about the guideline specifying educational programs for parent groups, Giroux said the school system planned either to use school committee meetings or to refer questions to the Cambridge city hospital. Since only one person had actually called the school with questions about AIDS, however, Giroux indicated they were leaning toward the latter option.

Both Hanson and Giroux also said that officials were considering adding AIDS education to the "health program" already provided to high school students. Hanson added that medical experts in the schools were already getting and answering questions about AIDS.

A letter which was written by Giroux and signed by Peterkin, was sent to all parents of Cambridge school children. The letter was also distributed in six non-English languages, in accordance with the state bilingual education law. It stated that a parent of Cambridge school children had died of AIDS, and contained these paragraphs (emphasis and capitalization as in the original):

"Medical authorities have assured us that the children DO NOT HAVE AIDS."

"In addition, information from federal, state, and city medical officials report that in studies of households where a member died of AIDS, no other member of the household contracted the disease.

"Medical authorities also stated that the disease is not commonly contagious. Individuals are infected with AIDS through unusual sexual contact or intravenously."

"Please be assured that to the knowledge of School and Health officials, No Cambridge School

student or parent has AIDS."

Giroux said that, even though the letter contained a telephone number for more information, there had been only eleven calls, all asking what schools the children had attended. The information was not revealed. Giroux noted that ten of the calls had been complimentary about the letter, while the eleventh "said we should have shown more compassion toward the deceased."

Some observers praised the school officials for the way they quieted any potential panic. The *Tab*, a Cambridge newspaper, quoted school committee member Glenn Koocher as saying that "the school department handled the situation exceptionally well." An editorial in the *Cambridge Chronicle* said the officials "acted promptly and with foresight."

Others, however, disagreed sharply, pointing first to the statement in the letter to parents that "Individuals are infected with AIDS through unusual sexual contact." Giroux defended his use of "unusual," saying that one medical authority had used the word "abnormal," but "we didn't think that was the appropriate word." Giroux said the authority had conveyed the impression that heterosexual contact could not transmit AIDS, so the word "unusual" was chosen.

According to Giroux, however, Hanson had objected to the word from the beginning. In an interview, she labelled it "misinformation": "You get AIDS not from 'unusual sexual contact,' but from any old sexual contact."

Others objected even more strongly. Kevin Cathcart of Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD) pointed out that the phrase was "an extremely strong value judgment."

Jonathan Handel, a founder of the Cambridge Lesbian and Gay Alliance (CLAGA), said the phrase was "dangerously vague."

Cathcart also objected to the emphasis of the statement that "the children DO NOT HAVE AIDS": "It feeds panic. Second, can you ever really say that someone definitely doesn't have AIDS? Also, it suggests that, if the children did have AIDS, they would have been treated differently, and that goes totally against the guidelines." The first guideline says that children with AIDS should remain in the classroom.

Dr. Hanson confirmed that this confusion has already occurred: "We occasionally get phone calls from parents who don't understand what we said about the situation. We tell them the kids don't have AIDS. They say, 'But if they did, you wouldn't let them in school, right?' And we say, 'Yes, we would,' and they freak out."

Another target of criticism was the guidelines' emphasis on education for staff and parents, but not for students. Handel commented, "School kids are fucking around with the same sex and the other sex, and they're shooting up intravenously. It's cowardly of the school system not to present them with the kind of information they need to protect themselves."

Cathcart added that "Filtering information about sex and drugs through parents and teachers guarantees that the real education for the kids will not happen. The kids don't need to be told that sex is wrong, that drugs are wrong. They need to hear about safe sex information, about sharing needles, and the teachers and parents are not going to be able to tell them what they need to know."

Newest battle of the sex wars

# Women's Bookstores Reject Lesbian Sex Magazines

By Janice Irvine

Censorship and the suppression of women's ideas provided the impetus for feminists to create our own institutions. Denied access by the dominant culture to the information we wanted and needed, women started bookstores, publishing houses, record companies, newspapers and other media. It is a bitter irony, then, when many of these same institutions are at the center of censorship controversies.

## News commentary

The debates, arguments and sometimes vitriolic attacks — the so-called sex wars — which began in the 1970s around the issue of s/m, have, to a great extent, been aired in the feminist media. The sex wars escalated in feminist periodicals, and simultaneously, feminist writing on all aspects of lesbian sexuality proliferated. Books such as Pat Califia's *Sapphistry*, the *Heresies* sex issue, and JoAnn Loulan's *Lesbian Sex* provided new and vital information about sex. *Coming to Power* by Samois and the lesbian sex magazines, such as *On Our Backs (OOB)*, *Bad Attitude (BA)*, *Outrageous Women (OW)*, and *The Power Exchange (PE)*, bring us essays, features and graphics to both educate and titillate.

While these publications might excite, amuse, dismay or irritate us, they represent a quantum leap forward in discussions about lesbian sexuality. Knowing that B. Dalton's wouldn't stock the material to satiate our curiosity, we trotted down to our local feminist bookstores. In some cases, we left empty-handed. The lesbian sex magazines have shattered the ennui of conch-cunt graphics, but at the same time, they have fueled the panic that often accompanies sexually explicit imagery and writing. Although eclipsed in the feminist and gay/lesbian media by the furor about anti-porn legislation, the controversy within the women's movement about the lesbian sex magazines represents the newest battle of the sex wars.

Across the U.S. and Canada, feminist bookstores have adopted policies not to carry some or all of the lesbian magazines. Others carry them accompanied by small cards which describe why bookstore staff find them objectionable. *OOB*, "entertainment for the adventurous lesbian," has been rejected outright by eight stores, according to publisher Debi Sundahl. These include Amazon Bookstore in Minneapolis, Women's Book Connection in Philadelphia, and Antigone Books in Tucson, the staff of which, according to Sundahl, called *OOB* "trash." At least 80 feminist bookstores have not responded to solicitations by *OOB*, which, Sundahl notes, "can be interpreted any way."

Womonfyre Books, in Northampton, Mass., refused to carry *BA* and *OW* after owner Jill Krolik circulated sample copies and determined "that people didn't care for them." Krolik does stock *OOB* because her former partner ordered it. In a public statement dated September 28, 1984, the women at the Toronto Women's Bookstore announced their decision not to carry *OOB*, *OW* and *PE* (see sidebar). The store does not carry *BA*, nor was it included in their initial decision, since bookstore staff claim they haven't seen it.

After a controversy that still raises hackles on both sides over a Samois publication, A Woman's Place Bookstore in Oakland, Ca., stocks the lesbian sex magazines. Although currently they do not place disclaimer cards next to them, they might institute the practice, according to Robin, a collective member who declined to give her last name. She told *GCN* that staff and customers are free to post cards next to material they like or dislike.

San Francisco-based writer Gayle Rubin charged that in 1980 staff of A Woman's Place censored *What Color is Your Handkerchief?* [see *GCN*, Vol. 12, No. 23], selling the pamphlet under the counter and harassing women who requested it. Robin, of A Woman's Place, denied Rubin's charge. "It's not true. She accused us of censorship and I just don't think that's right. We put cards up but we don't censor."

## I will not buy this book from under the counter like it's a sleazy French postcard.

Pat Califia, author/publisher/editor of *The Power Exchange*, told *GCN* that she was one of the women who could only get the pamphlet from under the counter. "I was there. I'm an eyewitness. They're lying," said Califia, who described the incident as "an episode of harassment." She told the bookstore staff, "I will not buy this book from under the counter like it's a sleazy French postcard."

The vehemence of the publishers of the sex magazines and the defensiveness of many bookstore staff contacted by *GCN* speak to the high level of pain, frustration and rage in our community as we clash over sexual behaviors, attitudes and feelings. Like the organizing around the anti-porn ordinances, feminist bookstores' refusal to stock lesbian sex magazines raises issues of censorship, suppression of information, and community accountability. Ultimately, however, it is another indicator of the power of sexually explicit materials to raise anxiety that can escalate into rigidity and fear.

A major question in a community which sustains its

bookstores, and therefore, expects accountability, is whether it is appropriate for a staff to make decisions not to carry certain materials. Noting that bookstores are powerful institutions which control our community's access to media and information, Gayle Rubin said that refusal to stock certain items, "... is not the same thing as state censorship, but it certainly has the impact within the community of suppressing ideas."

Califia noted that since many women will not buy erotic literature at a straight bookstore, feminist bookstores' refusal to carry this material eliminates a major outlet. "I'd say that's censorship. It's a moral impulse to protect other people who are presumed to be more stupid and less informed than those making the decision and I think women should be outraged," she said.

Krolik, of Womonfyre Books, thinks bookstores should have the prerogative to carry what they want. Although she told *GCN* she thinks censorship is "frightening", she said, "I do think women's bookstores should be given the option and not be pressured into carrying [the sex magazines]."

Bookstore staffpeople, who often function collectively, frequently disagree among themselves about the magazines and the broader issues of pornography and violence. Susie Bright, editor of *OOB*, said, "We found that sometimes half the collective has their own subscription while the other half is opposed to the magazines." Staffpeople, then, are faced with trying to reach consensus among themselves as well as attempting to maintain some accountability to the community.

Madge Kaplan, of New Words Bookstore in Cambridge, told *GCN* that while collective members disagree on many issues, they all believe that it is crucial for the debates on sexuality to occur within the larger arena of the feminist and lesbian community. "For us, it's a pretty fundamental

September 28, 1984  
Dear friends at *The Body Politic*:  
The process of making decisions for a feminist bookstore is often difficult and fraught with many political considerations. To define who our customers are and how we can best meet their needs is much more complicated than it might appear. One would think that when ordering books our guiding criteria is simple: if it is a feminist book, carry it; if it is anti-feminist or anti-woman, don't carry it. This general rule serves us 90 percent of the time.

Recently new material that is best described as lesbian pro-sadomasochistic has arrived at our store. After reviewing this material carefully, we found it to be anti-feminist, anti-woman, anti-semitic and racist. The material often utilizes traditional pornographic format in that it stereotypes women as enjoying violence and degradation and perpetuates an industry that exploits all women. This tendency brought home to us the fact that not every idea thought by a feminist is indeed a feminist idea. We as a bookstore will not promote the commercialized exploitation of women. We currently feel that the material that we have been asked to carry fits into this category.

Decisions made in this store are not carved in stone. Our process is continuous and is affected by community response. As a feminist bookstore it is our responsibility to consider your opinion regarding our position. However, the ability of those of us at the front desk to effectively respond to your verbal comments is limited. The best vehicle for your ideas is a letter so that all of us will have the opportunity to consider them. Please address any correspondence to The Toronto Women's Bookstore, 73 Harbord St., Toronto, Ontario M5S 1G4. Thank you,  
The women at the Toronto Women's Bookstore  
This letter is not to be edited.

Yet co-owner Arleen Olshan is adamant that Giovanni's Room is a forum for sexual politics. "We want to be able to supply the material that keeps people talking and thinking, whether people agree or disagree with the content," she said. However, she added that, since each bookstore is in-

## If it makes you uncomfortable, it's a good reason to look twice.



Susan Fleischmann/Bad Attitude

digenous to its community, it is entirely up to people who run the stores to decide what their responsibility is to that community.

Susie Bright, for example, described a woman who runs a feminist bookstore on the East Coast who loves *OOB* and would like to stock it but doesn't, since feminists in the town have threatened to boycott and picket the store if she does.

Not only does the suppression of the lesbian sex magazines deprive women of access to material on sexuality, it also eliminates a public forum for writers of sexually explicit material. Pat Califia told *GCN* that she has received handwritten manuscripts — sometimes hundreds of pages — that women have written for their lovers to turn each other on. "Women have written clandestine porn for a long time," she said. Califia added that unless it can be published, this material is usually hidden away in drawers, remains a secret, and dies with its authors. Similarly, Amy Hoffman, co-editor and publisher of *Bad Attitude*, said that writers have told her that the magazine has given them not only a place to publish, but also inspiration to create new work.

Ultimately, it is women's very interest in sexually explicit articles, graphics and images that is so threatening to some feminists. Pushing beyond the safe boundaries and moving into the daring, kinky or raunchy realms of sex is a direct affront to a branch of feminism that believes, as epitomized by Kathy Barry, in *Female Sexual Slavery*, that "... we are really going back to the values women have always attached to sexuality, values that have been robbed from us, distorted and destroyed as we have been colonized through both sexual violence and so-called sexual liberation. They are the values and needs that connect sex with warmth, affection, love, caring. To establish new sexual values is actually to resurrect these female principles ... Sexual values and the positive, constructive experience of sex must be based in intimacy" (emphasis in original).

This is the mirror image of our socialization by the dominant culture: that female sexuality, if it exists, is amorphous, soft, and gentle — never loud, never messy, never strong, demanding or rough. It is a simple ideology that allows for simplistic strategies such as civil rights legislation against pornography. Porn is bad, these feminists insist, because it causes violence against women.

But what about when porn is written, published, sold and bought by women? The answer, apparently, is that women interested in such things are sexist and anti-feminist. And so magazines are banned from bookstores, while writers, publishers and readers have been harassed and marginalized. Hoffman, of *BA*, notes, "I think some of the more orthodox anti-porn people are having difficulties figuring out how to fit the lesbian sex magazines into their ideology. They've dealt with it by implying that it's exactly the same as other porn and should be treated the same. Or they say that it's self-indulgent and since women have been hurt so much by pornography that it's selfish of lesbians to want to make their own porn."

Overwhelmingly, it is the s/m aspect of the sex magazines that the bookstores object to, although they will sometimes smoke screen this by saying the magazines are of poor quality.

*continued on page 6*

# Community Voices

## life threatening

Dear GCN,

The following is an appeal I have filed here at CTF-Central Facility [Soledad] against the treatment I have been receiving because of my homosexuality. These people are very much out of line with the way they treat a person that doesn't think the way they do, putting us in dangerous living and job situations, and harassing us (both from other prisoners and from staff).

The one-sex nature of prison life results in great mental suffering for the better part of the population. The heterosexuals are encouraged to relieve their frustrations on us, usually by violence or threats of violence, or the use of drugs to distort the mind and make the attack easier.

Who is this person going to turn to after such an attack when he has as much to fear from the staff as from the other prisoners?

Every person has both masculine and feminine tendencies, which results in a certain amount of internal conflict in this homophobic culture. In prison this conflict represents a constant threat to the majority of homosexuals' lives and well-being. The staff is as ignorant (unconscious) of these tendencies within themselves as the other prisoners are.

The administration is aware of the problems constantly arising involving homosexuals and has done nothing to correct them. This lack of responsibility is due to the administration's lack of knowledge in this area. They just remove the person to another institution [prison facility], and the life threatening situation starts up again there.

Sexual assault may be impossible to stop completely in these warehouses, but why encourage it by constantly placing homosexuals with dangerous cell partners, in jobs where known homophobes are present and generally encouraging the fear and hate of differences?

Sincerely,  
Brian F. Pool  
C-80454  
CTF-C G242  
Soledad, CA 93960

## ignoring the majority

(GCN received a copy of this letter to the Institute for Democratic Socialism in Boston.—Ed.)

Dear Sirs:

I'm using this salutation deliberately, since I just received a curious brochure from the Institute for Democratic Socialism, advertising a course on "Boston Politics: Building a Progressive Coalition" and listing six prospective speakers. All of them, apparently, are male. How does the Institute for Democratic Socialism propose to build a progressive coalition when it ignores the concern of a majority of the voting population? Further, it's not clear to me that any of the proposed speakers for the Boston Politics course are Black. Have you learned nothing from the Black Movement?

Have you learned nothing from the women's movement? Or is democratic socialism just to be a reversion to old-style sexist radical politics?

In despairing struggle,  
Rochelle Ruthchild  
Somerville, MA

## beyond political correctness

Dear GCN:

I would like to bring up an issue that I feel progressive gays should embrace: the anti-Apartheid movement. As a Black, gay prisoner I like very much what I have seen in GCN over the years, as a vehicle for gay men and lesbians to exchange thoughts. I like this a great deal. But it is also, I think, up to the progressive gay community to enlighten others that although being gay and out is one liberation, there are other kinds of liberation, which also are needed by people who are gay. One involves the anti-Apartheid movement. It really makes me feel good that so many gay people have taken this movement to heart.

In the gay "lexicon" a few years ago, there was talk about being "politically correct." Well, the time has come for us to be more than just politically correct; we must now be politically assertive. I feel this not just because I am Black or gay or "leftist," but because my heart says the time has come to accomplish this liberating task!

In the struggle,  
Emmette Mitchell  
C-22649  
PO Box 2000  
Vacaville, CA 95696

## dukakis' cowardly capitulation

(GCN received a copy of this letter to Massachusetts Governor Michael Dukakis.—Ed.)

Dear Governor Dukakis:

I am appalled and outraged by the recent removal of two foster children from the home of two gay men. I have known Don Babets and David Jean as friends and neighbors for several years, and I have long been impressed by their seriousness and dedication in everything they do. The shoddy treatment they received is especially galling in light of the extra long time that the state took in order to certify them as qualified foster parents. Your capitulation in the face of media publicity is nothing but cowardly. Are you utterly incapable of standing up to bigotry?

On one occasion I was introduced to the two children in question, and I have no doubt that Don and David were excellent foster parents for them. The tragedy of the hundreds of children for whom the state cannot find homes could only be compounded by the arbitrary denial of countless well-qualified individuals in the gay and lesbian community. It greatly behooves the Department of Social Services to allow for such placements.

I have supported your candidacy in the past. I am disturbed not only by this incident, but as well by your failure to actively support gay rights legislation, a promise you had made when you were soliciting our votes. If you continue to cave in to popular prejudice and deny us our fundamental civil rights, please don't bother to request our support the next time you need us.

Sincerely,  
John Kyper,  
Roxbury, MA

## arkansas help!

Dear GCN,

After receiving your publication for the past two years, it seems the Dept. of "Corrections" has suddenly decided that it's unrehabilitative for a prisoner in Arkansas to be gay and not be ashamed of it. As of April 22, 1985 they have begun destroying my GCN as it arrives [and those of the other two prisoners who get it too], along with any other gay lifestyle literature.

Has it suddenly been ruled against the law to read about homosexuality? Is there no longer such a thing as First Amendment to freedom of the press? I'm perplexed and disappointed and very angry with the Dept of Corr. decision, but I'm at a loss about what I can do because of my low knowledge of the law, and because of the inadequate legal facilities they offer here.

I enjoyed GCN immensely and wish to feast my eyes and heart on its pages once more, but I'm going to need assistance with a civil rights law suit against the Arkansas Dept. of Corrections. I'm enclosing a memo concerning my frustration that was sent to me from the Asst. Warden at this unit so as to give you an idea what dinosaurs these people are.

Please help me fight!  
Love and sincerity,  
Ronnie Pucilowski  
69255  
Box 500 — 8 BKS  
Grady, AR 71644

[Memo says: "Literature of this type determined to make inmates less capable of availing themselves of rehabilitation..."]

## all things not considered

(GCN received a copy of this letter to WNYC, the public radio station in New York City.—Ed.)

Dear WNYC:

Our continued support of National Public Radio and its local affiliate has been thrown into question recently, when we wrote NPR to praise an excellent, particularly moving piece on the people working in a San Francisco center for people with AIDS; we requested information on obtaining a cassette of that report. In response, we've received a copy of the 1985 National Public Radio Cassette Catalog, whose index lists material available on a mind-boggling array of subjects including virtually every known minority group — except gay men and lesbians! And, in the middle of an epidemic which has become the largest disease-related killer of young American men, NO reports on AIDS and its profound medical and social consequences nor on the political disasters surrounding AIDS research and funding are listed!

As gay men who've taken part with pride in the gay rights struggles of the past fifteen years, we very much resent once again being consigned to a status of invisibility in the present instance. If NPR will not consistently recognize the existence of 10% of the American population, no doubt you and they can get along without our financial support in the future.

Yours truly,  
Paul Buono & David R. Conchedo  
Clifton, NJ

## history lesson: sex addiction

Dear GCN:

Always appreciative of gay humor, I was delighted to see two such examples in the May 25 GCN. One was an ad from a counselling service soliciting customers who felt "Hooked On Sex"; one is "hooked" if "sex is an escape from depression and relationships." That first part is cute; we somehow can tell that one way out of depression is to feel good instead and have fun and feel pleasure. Is there a charge for that? As for relationships, well, I guess all of us here know that Correct Relationships (always use lots of capital letters) are those that are Emotional (as opposed to physical), Caring, Tender, Healthy, Loving, Ethereal (if not downright Theoretical), Dry (well, maybe just a little moist — as in tears — but certainly not wet — as in genitals), Uniformly Equitable, Dignified, Monogamous (or at least one at a time), and Respectful Of Our Partner As A Complete Human Being Because We Have Fully Obtained Their Life Story In All Its Political Ramifications. And since we also know you can't even masturbate without having a goddamn relationship (try it — William Simon decries the myth of the "content-free orgasm"), the ad was Uplifting, Inspirational, and Encouraging. Encouraging to sign up, that is; as "Bob" Dobbs of the Church of the Sub-Genius says, "You'll pay to know what you think."

The idea of sex as an addiction goes as far back as the 1940s in the psychiatric literature and has had a welcome revival in such books as Patrick Carnes' 1983 *The Sexual Addiction*. Borrowing from the successfully manufactured fear of the danger of drugs, "addiction" as desperation was coupled to the anxious idea of frenzied (or at least "inappropriate") hedonism and desire as degeneracy in such a way that the citizenry would absolutely demand the military intervention of law, psychiatry, social work, and medicine to save The Family (more capitals) and, lest we forget Christian charity, to save the perverts from themselves. The "addiction" theory is a resurrected branch of the older "uncontrolled impulse" school of prevention and extermination and is an absolutely vital part of the "crime wave" industry.

So what did we have additionally in the May 25 GCN but the J. Edgar Hoover Memorial News Note from Philadelphia's *Gay News* saying that child sexual abuse reports are up 35% for 1984 (for all quarters?) But don't let it discourage you that the ("roughly") 123,000 reports also contain hundreds of charges from Jordan, Minnesota and the animal-slaughter cults of Southern California; don't be bothered that perhaps the number is inflated by the reports of "kiddie porn" leveled against nudist families and the let's-take-a-pic-of-the-kid-just-out-of-the-shower division of the Straight Family (obviously headquartered in Chicago and a vast Ring); and don't mind the possible inclusion of groups like the Child Sensuality Circle or *The Familiest* being child prostitution links and promoters of incest; pay no attention (as has GCN) of my research being prosecuted as a sex crime; forget the consensual or fabricated reports; don't think twice. Perhaps the National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse should have waited before releasing their body count for NAMBLA's Annual Report on credit card sales of weeping boys whom we all know are stuffed into Lear jets and sent cross-country to drooling industrialists.

Our hero Hoover, long before being driven to commit suicide in his bunker, used to advertise his "sex crime waves" in the 1940s by citing masses of figures of increased rape and deviance from which he vowed to save America's women and children. Later, it was discovered he had added a vast bulk of statutory rape statistics to those for forcible rape, the former then being increased by post-WWII youths working up steam for law enforcement's juvenile delinquency craze of the 1950s ("Rubbing Without A Cause?" — sorry). Hoover also had you should pardon the expression a tendency to add figures, also increasing in the late 1940s and 50s, of arrests of gay men and some lesbians (drag and non-drag) and of transvestites (straight and gay) to crest the "tidal wave of sex crime." Reminiscent of those bygone days is the recent endorsement by Catherine McKinnon and others of anti-porn and anti-SM activist Diane E.H. Russell's 1983 book, *Sexual Exploitation*, saying her book was a New Dawn in the struggle against the sexual abuse "epidemic" (PS: Russell's data, which she herself points out for child sexual abuse, shows no increase in incidence over several generations of abuse victim cohorts).

But the area was never one to let facts get in the way of production and consumption or especially its theater. The counts are up and the war is paying off. Can we see the light at the end of the tunnel? Are we winning? Are we having fun yet?

David Sonenschein  
Austin, TX

**GCN welcomes letters to the editor. If possible, they should be TYPED and DOUBLESPACED, and where possible limited to five typed pages. They should be sent to: Community Voices, GCN, 167 Tremont St. #5, Boston, MA 02111.**

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## Need Them Books

The GCN Prisoner Project is completely out of gay paperbacks and would really appreciate it if you have any you won't be looking at again and could drop by the office or send in. Thanks very much!

# Speaking Out

## We Are Everywhere, and We Have Children

By Louise Rice

I am a lesbian parent of two teenage sons. They have either the same or fewer problems than most teenagers who live in this country. Most of the task of raising them has not had anything to do with lesbianism. The media's attempt to mix sex with childrearing is totally ludicrous to any of us who have spent the past 15 years mopping up vomit, attending parent-teacher meetings, doing laundry, washing dishes, and picking up underwear on the bathroom floor. But that's another story — all I can say to the *Globe*, to Dukakis, to DSS, is: they haven't been there and they don't know what they're talking about.

As far as gender identification is concerned, my sons weren't raised in a vacuum. Exposure to the media, to U.S. schools and culture has given them more gender identification than they know what to do with.

But ignorance on the part of the state is nothing new. This new decision scares me because Massachusetts is supposed to be more up to date than the rest of the country. When they start scapegoating gays here, it is because they are bowing to a wave of right-wing pressure. The past few years we've had one onslaught after another against us for whatever differences we might have, whether of race, or class, or sexual preference. But I don't want to defend myself for being different. I think that my kids don't just have a set of parents who are different. They have an improvement on some of the tired old models I grew up with! I don't think we'd be under attack the way we are except that our difference is meaningful. As lesbians and gay men we question the validity of what's normal. Kids who grow up with differences grow up with the ability to ask questions. I have been impressed with my kids' ability to identify with and stick up for other kids who are so-called different. And I think that comes from learning firsthand that the concept of "normal" is bullshit. I'm not interested in being considered normal. What's normal around here is racism, sexism, "covert" war on Central America, and not least of all, homophobia.

We're seeing a breakdown of rigid definitions of what men and women should be. Those changes, which benefit all people, didn't happen on their own. Gay men and lesbians

have been leading the way — leading it — and the part we play is vital to the changes in men and women's lives. So DSS doesn't just have to accept us as parents. They can learn from us. Because we have some of the answers they are looking for.

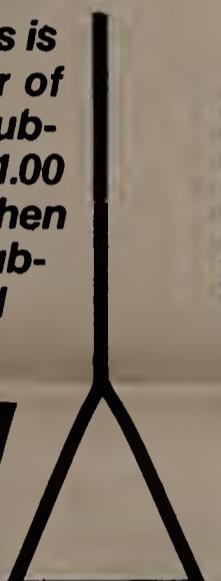
Finally, I want to say something about the importance of being out. These two men lost their children because they were out about their gayness. That takes a lot of guts. We've all had our experiences of fear and isolation in relation to our jobs or our families and friends. I have a pretty low profile at my own job. But we have to stand and be counted now. We have to let DSS and the State of Massachusetts and our closeted brothers and sisters know that we're here and we're everywhere and we have children. My own kids feel supported by the existence of other out gay parents and teachers at their schools. There are lots of gay parents in precarious situations who can't be out, because it would mean losing their children as these men have. Our strength is in our numbers and our pride. We are as diverse as those numbers. DSS and the legislature have a lot to learn from us. And before this is over, they'll hear it all.

*Louise Rice is a lesbian mother, a long-time activist, and a member of GCN's board of directors. This Speaking Out was a speech delivered at the May 23 demonstration protesting the removal of two children from their two gay foster parents.*

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Thank you for your support.

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# Boston Council Reviews Rights Commission Budget

By Christine Guilfoy

BOSTON — Almost one year after enactment of the Boston Human Rights Ordinance, a final phase of its implementation took place as a city council subcommittee considered the budget for the Human Rights Commission, the body charged with hearing complaints brought under the ordinance. In what was described by gay councilor David Sondras as "testing the director's mettle," some councilors took the opportunity to challenge the commission's planned outreach, staff hiring and authority.

The Human Rights Ordinance, proposed and passed in part through the efforts of the lesbian and gay community, remained only a good idea until the Human Rights Commission was appointed in March. Along with the appointment of seven commissioners came the appointment of gay activist and attorney Fred Mandel as executive director, and Benjamin Thompson as senior advisor on equal rights. The commission is charged with hearing complaints which fall under the jurisdiction of the ordinance, mediating solutions, and, if necessary, referring problems to the mayor, the courts or other rights organizations.

In his testimony before the government finance committee, Mandel said, "The budget that

you have before you reflects a conservative 'best estimate' of what expenditures are necessary to achieve our goals and objectives... given the quasi-judicial nature of this agency, which is empowered to both investigate complaints and hold adjudicatory hearings."

The commission's \$136,000 request includes \$97,300 in salaries for an administrative assistant, a secretary, a research analyst, and the executive director. But it was the line items which drew reactions from some members of the subcommittee, notably councilors James Kelly of South Boston and James Byrne of Dorchester.

Kelly reacted to the commission's request for money to advertise and print brochures which would explain the new ordinance and the existence of the commission. It's one thing to be available to take complaints, Kelly told Mandel, but "another thing to go out and drum up business, creating problems where problems do not exist."

Kelly also pressed Mandel on the use of the word "adjudicatory," saying, "basically the authority given by the council was mediation. I hope before even getting off the ground you're not going above the power given by the council."

Mandel said the function of the

commission is to investigate complaints, pursuing them only if there is "probable cause," and if the complaint falls within the jurisdiction of the committee. Mandel said if these first two conditions are satisfied, the commission will attempt to mediate a settlement. Should mediation fail, a hearing would be held and findings would be reported to the mayor and possibly other rights protection agencies. "We'll have to work cooperatively with agencies we overlap with. Federal and state agencies do the same," added Mandel.

Currently, Mandel is working as executive director and is being paid out of the mayor's discretionary fund. The employees will be hired when the commission receives its funding. The seven commissioners work without pay.

Perhaps the biggest stir occurred when Kelly said to Mandel, "I assume you'll comply with affirmative action guidelines [in hiring the commission's three employees]?" "I'll provide an opportunity for all people," answered Mandel, adding, "I hope we will have a mix. But you can't apply rigid affirmative action guidelines with such a small agency.... We'll find the best people."

Both Byrne and Kelly pushed the issue, with Byrne finally saying to Mandel, "You may be your first client."

In an interview following the hearing Mandel said, "I do believe you can't set up an affirmative action plan in a three-person office. But," he added, "we won't discriminate and we will comply with the city's affirmative action plan [which] calls for significant hiring of women and minorities.... We will advertise in all community newspapers."

Councilor David Sondras, who was also at the hearing, told *GCN* that because the commission is new, he believes the councilors were simply "giving a thorough airing of their fears."

With regard to the commission's budget, Sondras said, "I don't think they'll recommend cuts." An aide to Sondras, French Wall, said he expects the full council will consider and finalize the commission budget in June or July.

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## Fernando Alvarez

BOSTON — Before returning to Puerto Rico where he died of AIDS on March 29, 1985, at the age of 29, Fernando Alvarez told his Boston friends that any remembrance of him after his death should be in the form of a party. He specified Puerto Rican music and food, a chocolate cake, and "no sadness."

On Sunday, May 12, a celebration to remember and rejoice in Fernando's part in our lives was held at the home of an AIDS Action Committee (AAC) member; instructions for food and music were followed almost to the letter. The memorial was organized by members of the support services team of the AAC, which also arranges non-sectarian church memorial services for friends, lovers and relatives of those the committee has served and befriended.

As the evening began, hands were joined in a circle of silent remembrance. Each of us told anecdotes from our varied relationships with Fernando — humorous, tender, painful — all evocative of this affectionate, deeply caring man.

Fernando had come to Boston seeking treatment for AIDS. After linking up with the AAC, he went on to become far more than a recipient of committee services. He became an active part of the committee, and a significant source of support and inspiration.

Gatherings like this, subse-



quent to the death of a friend are becoming increasingly commonplace as the AIDS crisis continues. Unlike conventional rituals surrounding death in dominant culture, our ceremonies may very well provide an effective scenario for gay men and lesbians dealing with loss.

How often do friends and lovers, with whom many of us have our most intense and nurturing bonds, find acknowledgement, let alone comfort, at biological family-focused ceremonies? In this physically and emotionally depleting era of AIDS, it is heartening that many of us have come to recognize among ourselves a viable alternative.

It is a tribute to Fernando that through his illness and in his death, his friends have recognized in themselves a family in the fullest sense.

— Otto Coontz

## Dyke Sex Magazines

*continued from page 3*

ty. Krolik, of Womonyre Books, characterized *OW* and *BA* as dealing "with s/m and s/m articles" and she criticized a *BA* photograph of a knife near a woman's breast. She emphasized that she has a policy not to carry materials that depict violence against women. Yet she claimed, "I'm not carrying [the magazines] because of how they're written, their literary quality — not because of their content." Later she referred again to the issue of s/m by noting, "*BA* and *OW* don't have variety. It's pretty clear that it's one form."

Similarly, Sandy Florence, the manager of Antigone Books in Tucson, said owner Ede Rosen has a firm policy not to carry pro-s/m material. Yet she emphasized about *OW*, "I just wasn't impressed. I didn't think the magazine was well done." Women on the staff of the Toronto Women's Bookstore felt that there was too much similarity between what was being produced in lesbian sex magazines and pornography, according to Ellea Wright, a staff member. "They're a repetition of repressive and oppressive ideologies. The dominant and submissive theory is a problem," she said.

Ironically, *OW* and *PE* are the only sex magazines that identify as exclusively s/m magazines. Bookstore staff, then, have fallen into the knee-jerk mindset that conflates any explicit sexuality with s/m. Of *Bad Attitude*, Hoffman says, "We're interested in publishing about all sorts of lesbian sexuality, not just s/m. Some people take one look at it and decide just because it's about sex, it's about s/m. You point out that many articles aren't about s/m, but they still think it's an s/m magazine. We could also be described as a lesbian pro-vanilla or pro-dildo magazine."

All of the lesbian sex magazines

report an overwhelmingly positive response from lesbian readers and writers. Sold-out press runs are the norm. Grateful women have written in to say they feel less isolated and that they have been desperately seeking the kinds of information the magazines provide. Califia says the magazines can represent "A little piece of the community in their mailboxes that reminds them of what they'd like their lives to be like."

Undoubtedly, the success of the sex magazines can be attributed to the hunger within the lesbian community for information about sex and the impulse to move beyond the basics. Susie Bright said, "We're beyond finding our clits now... So much lesbian sex education has focused on this — You part your lips, find your clit, and boom, you're liberated... The sex magazines are about what images turn you on, not what makes you feel safe." Bright added that many lesbians identify a sexually explicit image as erotic if it generates no feelings or does not threaten them. "Porn, on the other hand, is very frightening. Mothers grab their children," she said.

The proliferation and success of the lesbian sex magazines indicate that many lesbians are no longer so willing to play it safe. Despite harassment, personal attacks, and attempts at censorship from both within and outside of our community, it seems clear that lesbians will continue exploring beyond the perimeters of what was once considered acceptable sexual expression. And given the excitement, confusion and intensity surrounding sexual images, words and behavior, it seems just as clear that feelings about the lesbian sex magazines will continue to run high. But, as Amy Hoffman advises, "If it makes you uncomfortable, it's a good reason to look twice."

# Gay/Lesbian Foster Parents

*continued from page 1*

Johnston mentioned only New York as having a policy for gay foster parents, Rizzo said she had given him letters from Minneapolis and D.C. which explained their policies. She told Johnston that California also has a policy of non-discrimination.

Beslauer said Johnston was only referring to state policies in his statements, but Rizzo said that Johnston and Dukakis ignored these jurisdictions, adding, "They have deceived [the press] and the people of this commonwealth."

#### Legislators Question Matava.

In an appearance before the Joint Committee on Human Services and Elderly Affairs, DSS commissioner Matava said all foster parent applicants would now be asked to answer a question about sexual preference. She told the committee that new policy provides a priority list of placements which caseworkers must now follow.

Describing a hierarchy of options, she said the first choice is to place the child with relatives; next, a married couple with parenting experience; single parents and gay people could be approved only if there is no other possibility for placement and with the express approval of the commissioner.

Matava told the committee that approval of a gay foster parent would be "highly unlikely," a comment which drew a range of reactions from committee members.

Co-chair of the committee, Sen. Jack Backman (D-Brookline), told Matava, "I don't know how you can tell by putting up some kind of list.... You may actually interfere with your social workers'

man, "if the child is doing well, he will remain with the family?" "Yes," replied Matava, who then equivocated, "in all that doing well entails."

While acknowledging that 28 percent of current placements are in non-traditional homes, Matava nonetheless implied there is a sufficient pool of foster parents available to place children under the new policy. In response to questioning, however, Matava was unable to say how many vacant homes were currently available.

Sen. Salvatore Albano (D-Somerville) told Matava that information he received had indicated that homes were so short that social workers sometimes provided a temporary spot for their clients in their own homes. But Matava insisted that emergency homes, at the least, were always available. Diane Greene, a consultant psychologist, told *GCN*, "There is definitely a shortage of specialized foster care placements." Several other workers, who declined to be identified, said their residential treatment programs have had difficulty getting children placed in homes through DSS.

The committee repeatedly asked Matava why the new policy was better and asked her to describe problems with the old policy. Matava said the new policy was a "refinement" of the best interests of the children standard and added that the new policy placed a greater emphasis on placing children with relatives. But when Matava could offer nothing more specific, Sen. Richard Krause (D-Arlington) told her, "I believe

psychologist with eleven years child advocacy experience, told the crowd the research explodes the myths that gay people cannot be effective parents, that they molest children and that they make their children gay. She said most studies indicate that there are no differences between children raised in gay and heterosexual homes although gay fathers may be more nurturant and the children may be more tolerant.

Drawing on research and statistics, Coleman said "children would be best protected by limiting contact with heterosexual men in traditional families."

Gay city councilor David Sondras told the crowd, "The leaders of this state have done nothing while gay and lesbian human beings have been insulted, fired from their jobs without cause, publicly humiliated, privately reviled and now made into legal inferiors.... All of us are sick and tired of leaders who take our energy, our vision, our commitment, our work, our money and our votes, but reject us." In a reference to liberal politicians such as Dukakis, who pull the gay vote, Sondras said, "Without us, the [liberal] coalition is bankrupt."

One of the most rousing speeches came from the Reverend Graylan Ellis-Hagler, the Black pastor of a church in the Roxbury neighborhood of Babets and Jean. Ellis-Hagler accused the *Globe* of "manufacturing" the story and said its reporter, Kenneth Cooper, has been uninterested in stories on policy brutality and misconduct. He called Cooper's initial story "not a report [but] a gossip column."

Saying the Rainbow Coalition is powerful, he urged the crowd to "campaign to make Michael Dukakis... who has hurt so many poor people.... a private citizen again."

Fred Mandel, the executive director of the newly appointed Boston Human Rights Commission, read comments from U.S. Congressman Barney Frank (D-Mass.) expressing outrage at the state legislature's action.

Former mayoral candidate and longtime activist Mel King said the situation must be turned around so that those who are part of the Rainbow Coalition "[are] able to change this city and this state."

Congressional candidate and gay activist Vin McCarthy challenged Royall Switzler, who introduced the House amendment prohibiting placement of foster children in gay homes: "I'll match my three children against the moral fiber of his any day of the week," said McCarthy.

McCarthy drew cheers from the crowd when he asked, "When was the last time a homeless person was taken in in [Switzler's affluent suburban] hometown of Wellesley? When was the last time somebody was given a free meal in that town? Royall Switzler, take care of your own hometown, you bigot."

McCarthy also criticized Dukakis for remaining silent on the amendment and compared it to a law passed in Nazi Germany which prohibited Jews from teaching.

Longtime gay activist, Eric Rofes, founder of BLGPA and an author and teacher, said that children of gay parents do suffer repercussions, just as children who are different in other ways do. Giving other examples of how children suffer from society's "fascistic drive to be the same," Rofes said "children become victims of bigoted adults." Rofes told the crowd, "The lesbian baby boom cannot be stopped and gay men who choose children cannot be stopped by a bigoted state house."



Rosemary Dunn-Dalton, chair of BLGPA, and her daughter, Brigid Dalton.

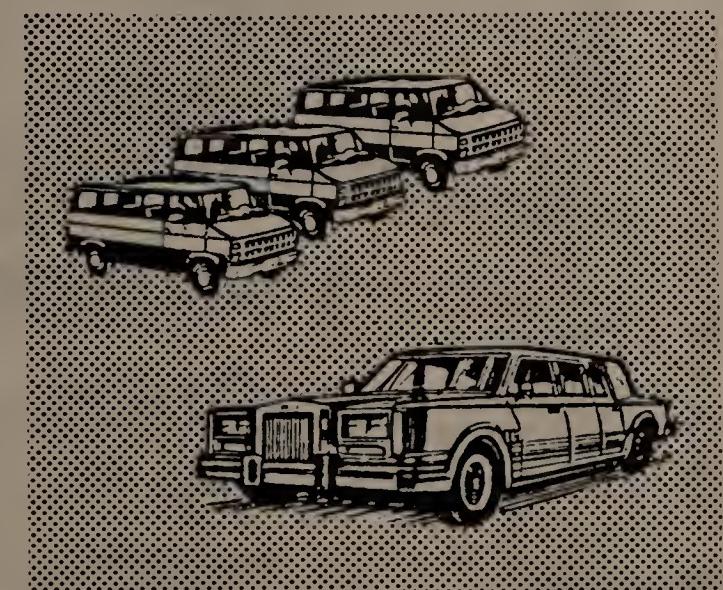
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Connie Chan, clinical psychologist, assistant professor at UMass/Boston, and lesbian activist, speaking at rally on May 23.

thoughtful deliberations."

But Rep. Ellen Canavan (R-Needham) had a different reaction, saying, "The House of Representatives made a statement and we expect it will be heard and followed. I am incensed to hear you say it is 'highly unlikely.' We do not want children placed in gay households."

When asked what she will do about current placements which do not fit the guidelines, Matava said all placements are reviewed every six months and she would make a decision on any reviews involving non-traditional households. "And," asked Back-

you bowed to political pressure."

Some committee members expressed dismay that placements with relatives had not been previous policy, but others questioned Matava on the wisdom of such placements when a child was being removed for reasons of physical or sexual abuse.

Interestingly, several child care workers told *GCN* that they often recommend woman-headed households when placing children who have been abused in the past by a male.

#### March and Rally May 29

Nancy Coleman, an attorney for Babets/Jean and a clinical

**From Hollywood to home movies, from back room studios to international festivals, lesbians and gay men have left behind their traditional positions as onlookers among the dark theater audiences. We have taken the camera in our hands and we have begun to create our own visions of our diverse lives. In salute to our art and our courage, GCN presents a special supplement on gay and lesbian film.**

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- \* German Filmmaker . . . page 12
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- \* Before Stonewall . . . page 14

## New England Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

# A Healthy Preoccupation with Sex

By Michael Bronski

It continues to amaze that straight people still have such resistance to using the word "gay" to describe anything in which they have a personal or cultural investment. When finally forced to admit that someone in the pantheon of "high culture" was a homosexual — like, say, Proust — they are so careful to add: "well, he's not a gay writer, he's much more than that." I was recently on a television talk show to discuss Harvey Fierstein's *Torch Song Trilogy*. I referred to it as a "gay play," and the interviewer, a smart, articulate and informed woman, said she didn't consider it a gay play because she identified very strongly with the

main character — a drag queen. I pointed out that I always identified very strongly with Cio-Cio-San in *Madame Butterfly*. Did that make Puccini's opera a "gay opera?" She looked startled, then said, "But seriously . . ."

Time after time the word "gay" is assiduously avoided to describe anything which might be enjoyed by straight people. (This, of course, is not the case when describing negative things: AIDS is the "gay cancer"; John Gacy, a "gay mass murderer.") Not only is the intrinsic value of a book or film presumed to lessen when the moniker "gay" is attached to it, but its commercial value is also seen as decreased. In a culture that equates "art" with profit it

should be no surprise that devalued sexuality should be perceived as insuring poor marketability. It's hard to market anything queer.

It was quite a surprise then when last year Boston's Nickelodeon Cinema decided to produce a three-week long "Gay Film Festival." (This was actually Boston's second Gay Film Festival: GCN had sponsored one at the Boston Film and Video Foundation the year before.) What was even more surprising was that almost all of Boston's critics, and media, accepted the idea without any heckling like, "what is a gay film festival, anyway?" In fact the films shown were deemed so exciting and innovative (thanks to the expertise of booker George Mansour) that it was awarded the Boston Society of Film Critics award for Best Film

Series. Easy acceptance from the critics was a nice sign that Boston may be becoming a little less provincial; more importantly, the fact that a mainstream commercial theater was sponsoring the festival was indicative that the people in the position to decide what is and is not marketable had decided that — for that year anyway — "gay" was.

The festival did quite well. So well in fact that "the Nick" then featured a "Summer Camp" festival in the same vein. (The kicker, of course, is that this year, for whatever reasons, they decided not to have the festival. The moral, apparently, being that even if queers might bring in money, there are still a lot of reasons not to be connected with them.) So this year the Orson Welles in Cambridge is presenting a Gay and Lesbian Film Festival —

once again booked by the infallible George Mansour — and it is being co-sponsored by Gay Community News. The gay community has long realized that it must engage in some generation of income to support its projects and activities. It is encouraging to see that the business community now sees the advantages of being more connected to the community and to the movement.

Questions of marketability aside, we might do well to ask what about this group of movies makes it a "gay film festival?" Basically it is films that may be of interest to lesbians and gay men. Almost all of the films are about gay characters. Two of them — *The Times of Harvey Milk* and *Burroughs* — are documentaries about actual gay men. Some of the films are made by gay people — *Taxi Zum Klo*, *Maedchen in*

continued on next page



Salo: The 120 days of Sodom



Abuse



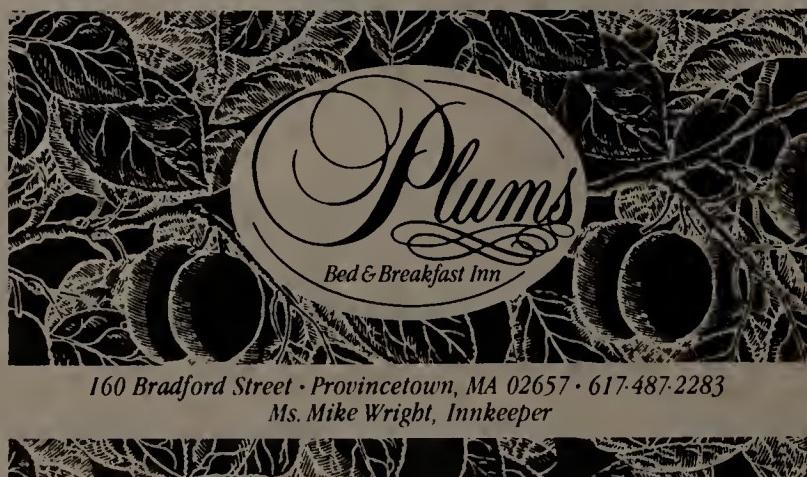
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continued from last page

*Uniform* — while others — *Scrubbers*, *Corrupt* — examine the homoerotic content in the lives and worlds of ostensibly straight women and men. Technically they range from the beautifully mounted and expensively produced *Another Country* to the gritty, homo movie quality of Curt McDowell's *Loads*. Many of the films are independent productions — *Taxi*, *Abuse*, *Harvey Milk* — all testifying to the fact that the most exciting ideas and films are often deemed unacceptable by mainstream producers.

Since there is no hard and fast definition of what a gay film is or isn't, it's impossible to place any real parameters on what a gay film festival is or isn't. But looking over the titles which are going to be playing the Orson Welles, there is a predominant theme — or at least preoccupation — which emerges. Not surprisingly, it concerns sex. But more particularly, it is sex in relation to power, sex as a healing agent for people who have been abused by power, and sex as a means of attaining self-empowerment.

Perhaps the most powerful and startlingly ambiguous examination of sex and power is Pasolini's *Salo: 120 Days of Sodom*. The last film made before his political assassination in 1975, *Salo* is an updating and revising of de Sade's epic pornotopia *120 Days of Sodom*. Set in fascist Italy just before the end of World War II, it examines, sometimes in graphic detail, the intersection between sex as power and power as sex. Four (male) authorities kidnap a group of female and male youths to be tortured and killed. It is not an easy film to sit through; Pasolini demands that we respond to his images and his difficult questions. Not only a meditation on sex and power, *Salo* also insists

that we examine our own responses and relationship to the art form, as well as its content.

On a double bill with *Salo* is Curt McDowell's short *Loads*. Shot in black and white, it is a cinema verite scrapbook of five straight men that the filmmaker convinces to come to his loft to have sex with him (i.e. get blown). Sexually graphic, the film works as a turn-on but also raises questions. How straight are these men who have consented to have sex with a gay man on film? Who has the real power here: the straight man who is ostensibly being catered to by a gay man, or the gay man who is controlling the situation with his wits and a camera? How is sex being used here — for either person, and perhaps more importantly, how are we responding to these images, to the situation, to the "real" narration, and to the fantasy of the film itself? In less than 20 minutes *Loads* probably provides more enjoyment and raises more questions than most other films even attempt.

Artie Bresson's *Abuse* is also a hard film to sit through. At first the story of a physically abused gay teenage boy — the camera watches as the boy's parents inflict violence upon him — the story progresses as the boy becomes involved with a gay filmmaker who is involved in an abuse prevention program. On a simplistic level the film juxtaposes this nurturing gay relationship with the reality of battering by heterosexual parents. But Bresson is too intelligent to leave it at that. The nature of the filmmaker/young man's relationship is questioned: what does the boy need? why is the filmmaker doing this? is the filmmaker (who is making a documentary with the young man) using him? Although it is

clear in *Abuse* that gay sex is a nurturing, healing experience, Bresson opts for no easy answers. Hell, he doesn't even opt for easy questions. Determined to provoke at every turn, *Abuse* will stimulate everyone who sees it and infuriate anyone who thinks they have, or who wants, an easy answer. (Given the recent gay foster parent controversy in Boston and the discussions which are sure to come from the showing of *Abuse*, this film should be mandatory viewing for everyone concerned.)

The classic *Maedchen in Uniform* by Leontine Sagan is about sex and power in a girls' boarding school in pre-World War II Germany. It is at once an anti-fascist allegory and a morality tale of the power of same-sex bonding, as well as a commentary on the healing nature of sexuality in the face of repression. The simplicity of this story is fractured in the more complex *Scrubbers*. Made several years ago by the Swedish actress/director Mai Zetterling, *Scrubbers* details the lives of women in prison. Some of them are lesbians and some aren't, but while the film is careful in showing how their relationships sustain them, it also never avoids the real conflicts between these characters.

While *Taxi Zum Klo* and *Another Country* are also about sex and power, they are more concerned with sexuality as identity. Whatever problems that director Frank Riploh's

autobiographical main character encounters, it is clear that he gets his strength to overcome them through his sexual identity and his sexual encounters. Aside from hard-core porn, it is difficult to imagine a film which celebrates gay sexuality as much as *Taxi Zum Klo*. In contrast to *Taxi*, makers and promoters of *Another Country* have gone out of their way to say that this is not a "gay movie." Yet this English boarding school tale of incubating traitors — makes the radical statement that sexuality and sexual identity are not only important but possibly the most important factors in life — in this case more important than national identity, ideological persuasion and class background. And especially so if that sexuality puts you at odds with the powers

that be.

There are twenty films to be shown at the Orson Welles for the Gay and Lesbian Film Festival. There is a broad range — though there could be more lesbian movies — and there should be something for everyone. Opening night is a benefit for Gay Community News and will feature the New England premieres of two new films — *Drifting* and *Each Other* (prints were unavailable at press time) — which have been hits at both the San Francisco and the New York Gay Film Festivals. So whatever you think a "gay film" is, or what a "gay film festival" should be — or who or what is marketable to whomever or whatever — come to the Festival and see the state of our art.

## TELEVISION



*Scrubbers*



*Choosing Children*



*Another Country*

*Each Other*

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# Punks and Politics in

By Cindy Patton

Some film critics have recently identified a "post-feminist" trend in filmmaking, a term sure to make political activists cringe. Actually, rather than suggesting that feminism is passe, the term implies that a feminist sensibility has permeated mass culture.

The epochal notations invented by critics ("post-modernism" is my favorite) reflect the terms of debate about cultural artifacts like film, fiction, art and architecture, but have little to do with a time line of particular political events. Still, these shifts in artistic creations do indicate some of the gains and losses of historical political movements, or at any rate, give us clues to the impact on mass culture of often rarified political critique and praxis.

Criticism is a meta-process, a dialectic on the creative work at a particular time. New artists strike out in defiance of constraining forms and ideas, and in addition, draw elements from earlier theories that were once an object of rebellion but are no longer felt as constraining. Critics name these new forms (with special kudos going to the critic who thinks up the oh-so-cleverest name) and define the new style by choosing a set of distinguishing elements encompassed in the reaction to the immediate past and the appropriation of classic or transcendent forms. The contemporary critical gestalt exhibits a bored disdain for technological trickery combined with a cynicism about the depth of human character.

Post-modernism is the ultimate in this rebellion, especially as it is reflected in the most monumental art form, architecture. It rejects genre by fusing any and all earlier styles, an elegant sort of nihilism that coolly asserts its novelty by claiming that there are no new styles to be invented. New wave music is post-modern as it rips off, distorts, and teases earlier musical styles.

Post-feminist film continues the post-modern trend. These films presume some familiarity with feminist ideas, but do not depict the quest for selfhood common to the feminist films of the '70s. The term is new, and the trend is new, so you can pick and choose which films you count in. Most lists include *Born in Flames*, *Variety*, *Smithereens*, *Vorte*, *Fast Times at Ridgemont High*, the pseudo-punk *Liquid Sky*, and one must certainly add *Desperately Seeking Susan*. Although European, and quite different in many respects, I would also add *A Question of Silence*, which may be viewed as a transitional film.

Feminist film is didactic, a portrayal of women discovering feminism. The emotional weight of these films is the anguish of women discovering their own oppression, and reformulating the terms of their identity during a brief vacation from patriarchy. They are optimistic, even in their tragedy, because they project a hope for etching out a feminist space in male culture. The

mainstream examples of feminist films include *Woman Under the Influence*, *An Unmarried Woman* and *Nine to Five*, among others.

Far from implying that feminism is passe, post-feminist film shows women whose basic understanding of the world includes feminist principles. Post-feminist film re-integrates women into male culture, but these women have new expectations — they are self-centered and quirky, not directed toward fusing feminist notions with pre-feminist consciousness. The men, too, have new expectations: often brutal and sexist, they suspect a feminist under every bush.

These new films provoke a visceral, anti-utopian identity crisis that verges on nihilism. Although they stand in a direct line of descent from the women's films of the '40s and the feminist films of the '70s, post-feminist films also draw on youth films of the '50s. They are a mix of genres and styles — film noir, screwball comedy, teen romance, and European surrealism.

In contrast to this eclecticism, feminist films generally reject the traditional Hollywood styles as sexist and move toward very personal, *cinema verite* styles in narrative and cinematography. Bergman-type closeup pans and long takes where the characters move in real time replace the quick cutting and complex foreground-background blocking of *film noir*, adventure cinema (like cowboy and war movies), and even of "women's films" of the '40s, which used *film noir* style (*Mildred Pierce*) or the clipped pacing of stage comedies (*Hepburn/Tracy* series). Indeed, the commercial feminist films move toward an almost storybook style and pace much more reminiscent of recent French films. This may account for why, of all those prominent in the "feminist wave" internationally, Diane Kurys (*Peppermint Soda*, *Molotov Cocktail*, *Entre Nous*) is still making a box office go of it. It may also suggest why the commercial feminist films seem a little dull and languid to North Americans used to cop-story pacing and Western landscapes of superhuman proportions.

Post-feminist assumptions about the characters' understanding of women's changing role has broad implications for the progress of the narrative, the most critical difference between feminist and post-feminist film. In feminist film, the lead woman character undergoes and metamorphosis: she encounters a sexist society and discovers herself and her aspirations to be located in negative relation to men. Sometimes the men around her are totally perplexed by her sudden change toward making demands as a person. In other films, proto-feminist men serve to make her passage more difficult: they are "nice guys" who, while sexist, are portrayed as another sort of victim of sexism. *Kramer versus Kramer* and *Or*

*inary People* go whole-hog to show how men, too, are alienated under the patriarchy, even if their rewards for submission to the system exceed women's.

The essential relationship between women and men in these films shows a dramatic change from the "women's films" which addressed women's changing role during and after the World War II mobilization. "Women's films" portrayed women as having secured a niche, or beach-head, in the battle of the sexes, and suggested that if they did not tread too far into men's turf they could actually be respected for being strong. But unlike the women portrayed in the feminist films of the '70s, these women began the movies as strong women and fought their battles from a more established sense of who they were. The feminist film's narrative is centered



*Born in Flames*: post-feminist selfhood realized

## Variety

Directed by Bette Gordon, written by Kathy Acker, with Sandy McLeod, Will Patton, Luis Guzman, Nan Goldin, Richard Davidson.

### A Question of Silence

Written and directed by Marleen Gorris, with Cox Habema, Edda Barends, Nelly Frijda, Henriette Tol, Edy Brugman (in Dutch with English subtitles).

By Cindy Patton

Two of the best post-feminist films explore the feminist discourse on language and silence in interesting, though different, ways. Bette Gordon's *Variety* is a finely crafted *film noir* revival. Shot in 16mm with flat, neutral tones, broken by studied splashes of color, Gordon gets as close as she can to the richly textured black and white of traditional *film noir*. The muted tones and understated but exquisite cinematography are a stunning relief from the monumental or special-effects camera work of contemporary Hollywood.

Gordon's heroine, Christine, is much like herself, a nice, middle-class WASP, trying to make a living in the big city. Gordon grew up in Newton, Mass., and left for college in 1968. Involved in SDS and then in the women's liberation movement, Gordon stayed in academia through one of the first sex-discrimination suits against a university. She now teaches film production and theory at Hofstra University. Her technical expertise, political acumen, and wizardry at choosing good production priorities on small budgets combine in *Variety* to produce a fine imitation of *film noir*: good cinematography backs up excellent acting, and superb editing ties the pieces together.

But the emulation of *film noir* is not just a technical choice. Gordon is acutely interested in the political implications of form. Though much less experimental than her earlier works, *Empty Suitcases* and *Exchanges*, *Variety* is no less political: it is an homage that attacks the premise of the style it venerates.

*Film noir* is about good and evil, or more precisely, about pure and situational evil. The black and white visual tone of classic *film noir* repeats the moral posture, the unusual camera angles and extreme changes in field composition (now you see a half-lit face close-up, now you see a shadowy figure approaching from over the shoulder) add the dimension of moral ambiguity.

Crimes comprise the plot-line of the linearly scripted *film noir*, and the filmgoer becomes a voyeur

who is inescapably implicated in the immorality of the film's characters. *Film noir* is a meditation on the urban predator: watching and being watched, hunting and being hunted, subject and object.

Feminist filmmakers and critics have been obsessed with *film noir*, particularly with Hitchcock, for here we see laid bare the roots of the psychological subjugation of women. It is no surprise, then, that Gordon should be so interested in *film noir*. But where most feminists reject the form, Gordon capitalizes on the nostalgia toward the *film noir* sensibility, which seems less socially troubled today than the true-to-life tyranny of Hollywood's current "serious" movies. Revitalizing *film noir* in this context challenges the notion that our world is composed primarily of political entities which are either good or bad, and reintegrates the individual's moral questions. But here comes her controversial twist.

Gordon takes as her theme pornography, the hotly debated but single most widely identified example of men's voyeurism (and to some, possession) of women. But she does not settle for a didactic assault, like *Not A Love Story* or *Pretty Baby*. She wants to explore the relationship between pornography and women's search for a meaningful language about their sexuality. In *Variety*, she explores Christine's attraction to and repulsion from pornography as she attempts to escape from the dyadic identity of man-subject, woman-object.

The most important metaphor in the film is the ticket booth of the porno theater where Christine has taken a job. Christine's life becomes defined by in-betweenness — she loses her grounding in the "real world" where her sensitive-man boyfriend begins to treat her like a whore, yet she cannot really participate in the special world of the porno film. This idea of the formless void between two oppressive ideas is central to Gordon's exploration of female sexual identity. In the broadest sense, it represents women's search to understand their role as an object in the patriarchy, and as the subject in their own self-defined sexual universe.

Caught between accepting the oppressive language that men have created for women's desires or negating the words and, by extension, the reality of sex for women, we are at a loss for a language to express our desires: in-betweenness is the abyss of no words at all.

The notion of silence and language is further explored in two scenes when Christine recites porno



*Variety*: Christine in the ticket booth, caught between the patriarchy's objectification and her own quest for sexual self-definition

# Post-Feminist Film

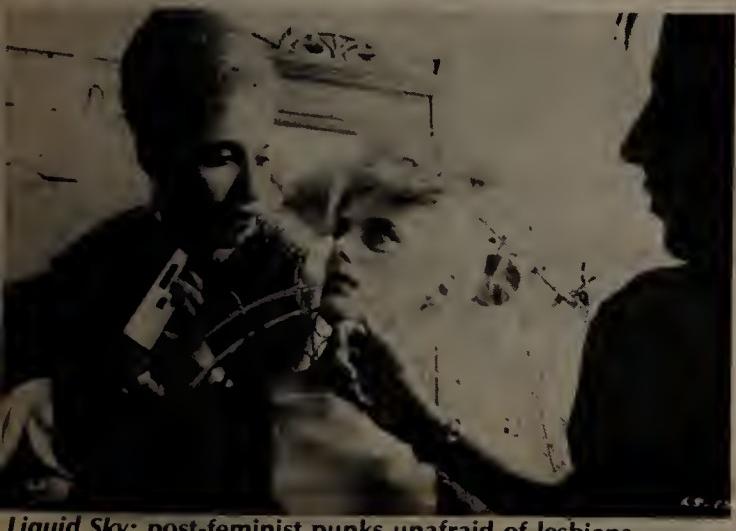


around the woman's perception of her difference, her psychodynamic process of understanding what the culture says about her. The protagonist in the feminist film is not engaged in a "war between the sexes" with particular men, although that may be a part of the plot. Rather, she is engaged in a more complex psychological, even cultural, battle with the forces of patriarchy.

The men in feminist films usually represent male types, or even the whole male culture. Unlike the "women's films," which showed how individual women might reach a compromise with particular men, feminist film shows women coming to terms with the culture of patriarchy. But the textual clues are missing to indicate that the men in these films are epochal men; it is too easy to be confused by the easy-going, languid photographic



Silkwood: the last of the feminist-genre romantics



Liquid Sky: post-feminist punks unafraid of lesbians

and narrative style, to interpret the male characters as real men, and to afford them too much personal sympathy. Only Cassavetes' controversial *Woman Under the Influence* successfully integrates filmic style and characterization with the points it tries to make about patriarchal culture, over and against individual men or women. The widely popular *The Rose* and perhaps the last of the feminist films, *Silkwood*, represent a bridge to the post-feminist films: they slip back into traditional genres by placing women against the sweeping vistas of patriarchal culture (and in *Silkwood*, against real, gritty Midwestern panoramas), the image of manifest destiny, the lone individual (though in these cases women) set against horizons that may defeat her.

In post-feminist films, many of them employing teenagers embedded in quasi-punk culture, the characters do not go through the ritual passage of discovering feminism, or their place in the patriarchal landscape. In these films, the characters are assumed to have understood the impact of the women's movement on their aspirations and possibilities, and are sophisticated about their power and limits in male culture. They are like the strong women characters of the war years in this regard, although they are generally engaged in the problems of youth rather than the adult issues of home and career. As youth films, the post-feminist films reclaim some of the *ennui* of the male youth films such as *Rebel Without a Cause* and the picaresque aspects of *Easy Rider*.

These new women are pragmatic, viewing themselves as existing in an economy where their bodies as sexual objects are their primary trump card. Yet unlike earlier films, this commodity retains its value for the heroine, and is not lost in the first sale. These women recognize their own sexual agency, and in this way are more sensual than most of the women in the '40s films, who were portrayed as repressed, frigid, or as dykes — the price paid for financial success in a man's world — or like the women in feminist films, who were often too damaged by men's use of their sexuality to feel sexual agency, or just plain too involved in other issues.

The charge of lesbianism does not frighten the women in the post-feminist films; they view a relationship with a woman as a fair choice, not as a way of opting out of the patriarchy. The possibility of moving in and out of bisexuality is often introduced in these films as an extension of sexual agency rather than as a solution to oppression. In *Liquid Sky*, the lesbian relationship is no better than the heterosexual ones, but it is the men in the film who deal with lesbianism as a problem, not the women in these relationships. The concern over homosexuality,

which consumed entire plots and subplots in feminist films, is taken for granted as existing, even if the form and message about lesbian or gay relationships is not written by the "gay lib" book.

When sensuality found its way into women's films, it represented the feminization of overly masculine female protagonists. In feminist films, it signals the de-animalization of sensitive males. In post-feminist films, women seek sexual pleasure, and though they are often burnt in all of the age-old ways, they continue to assert their right and ability to make sexual choices. This is perhaps the most controversial but solidly feminist aspect of these new films: far from representing a kind of masochistic insistence on relationships with men who are not cut from the feminist mold, the lessons drawn from their experiences with imperfect men (and women) in a sexist world only makes the post-feminist heroine more cunning and determined to have her needs as a sexual person met.

Their optimism derives from our belief that they have won in their own battle to overcome the internalized sexism that crushes women's sexuality. We feel optimistic about their ability to survive in a harsh world of male sexual privilege. These women bounce back because, no matter what happens, they are not passive sexual victims: when men abuse them they fight back, insisting that there is a difference between willfully bargaining their bodies and having their sexuality stolen from them. This is a very anti-idealistic view of women. And it has been controversial among feminist critics and filmmakers, because it is a self-portrait created by women.

In the post-feminist framework, these heroines are demanding a new sexual economy where they may exist as agent and as commodity, as a step toward a totally safe and free world in which to be sexual. And in accepting that contradiction, they seem to gain a corner on the market of their own sexuality. The post-feminist heroines are not nice girls; they are punked-out Mae Wests whose brazen insistence on their sexuality disarms men long enough to give the women the upper hand.

Post-feminist films show an exciting shift in the terms of feminist debate and in the discussion about message versus form. The return to older, more familiar genres and narrative forms as well as the pragmatism — even nihilism — of the protagonists has certainly made some feminist critics denounce these films. But there is something fun, challenging, and novel about them, even if they do not project the apocalyptic fervor of the earlier feminist films. In a political environment which only gets more dismal, these quirky films provide a new format for discussing feminist issues.

## Forms for Women in Movies

stories to her proto-feminist boyfriend. He is disturbed, angry, and shaking. The stories she recites have been part of his male culture, but are subtly changed in text, rendered melodic and powerful by her poetic chanting.

Near the end — one source of extreme controversy — Christine tries on the clothes and posturing of the porno film stars. The silence, the lack of language for her sexuality is subverted by visual imitation of her new icon: Christine makes herself into a sexual object for her own private show to herself. A mirror reflection symbolizes her question for a subjectivity denied both by her boyfriend's horror of her supposed objectification at the theater and by his nice-guy support of her writing.

Christine confronts her middle-class fascination/horror of the sex industry — and her own silenced sexuality. She upsets men in a porno store when she thumbs through magazines wearing her new motorcycle jacket. She asserts herself as subject/self-object in a sphere that doubly oppresses women by projecting them as men's objects and excluding them as subjects.

In a different yet equally controversial way, *A Question of Silence* also addresses the "silence" of women. Brilliantly acted and directed, the film depicts the trial of three women — strangers to each other — who have brutally murdered the male owner of a clothing store. A female psychiatrist is assigned to evaluate their sanity. They offer no assistance in their defense — for which the feminist psychiatrist hopes to make a plea of insanity in view of women's class oppression. One woman, the only one given a name — Christina M. — never says a word until the end of the film, when she inquires about her children.

As in feminist films, each woman learns something important about her dignity in the process of awaiting trial. But these revelations are more in the way of epiphanies than rites of passage to feminist consciousness. Each woman has a kind of inner strength as a woman before the murder, but their power is transformed into a will to survive as they await arrest. This intuitive feminism marks *Question* as post-feminist: the only woman who goes through the feminist genre soul-searching is the sole self-consciously feminist character in the movie — the psychiatrist. Coming to the realization that these women are indeed sane and that so testifying will destroy her career and possibly her marriage to the proto-feminist husband/lawyer tests every

feminist bone in her body.

The use of surrealism injects a bleak humor (not unlike that in another recent Dutch import, *The Fourth Man*) and sets this film apart from feminist film. Feminist film pursued verite to portray women speaking their own truth. *A Question of Silence*'s surrealism evokes the experience of existing on the edge of sanity by women who have no language. Although the women are more like the protagonists in feminist films in age, *A Question of Silence* takes care to find women from a variety of class and occupational backgrounds. *A Question of Silence* uses cinematic surrealism, whereas other post-feminist films — embedded in a punk landscape — draw on characters who make themselves to be surreal.

The revival of classic montage, with visual and conceptual comparisons sequence to sequence, marks another departure from the slow-moving, real-time style of feminist film. Women in feminist film tell their stories in linear fashion. *A Question of Silence* links the stories of several women through intercutting the fragmenting time, as each woman tells her story up to the scene of the crime, then describes arrest and the prison experience. Only the trial scene at the end portrays the women together — united in their silence and common crime, seen as interchangeable by the men in the court who cannot provoke them to speech.

The humor at the end of the film shatters any polemic sense. Despite the long and eloquent speech by the feminist psychiatrist (in true discursive feminist style) the judge is outraged and tries to make her change her evaluation that these women are sane. The defendants begin laughing, then the psychiatrists laugh. The judge tries to silence the women, who so far have refused to utter one word in their defense. Several women who witnessed the murder but who have never spoken a word for the whole film have attended the trial and also begin laughing. The court is cleared and the women and their trial proceed without them.

The juxtaposition of silence and speech with surreal cinematography and montage make *A Question of Silence* a complex and very European film. Some North American audiences have found the murder (which shows no blood) anti-feminist. The bleak humor, though usually at the expense of the pompous men, has also been the subject of disapproval by North Americans who prefer their politics served with seriousness.

Both *A Question of Silence* and *Variety* (which was produced for German television and thus is a little cerebral) are complex and disturbing films — unusual fare for U.S. audiences. They have received much more critical discussion than some of the lighter post-feminist films, who may have escaped the wrath of feminist critics but only because they are not taken seriously. It will be interesting to see the direction of feminism in/on film: the mainstreaming of feminist-type films like *Silkwood*, versus the re-engagement in traditional genres of *Variety* and *A Question of Silence*, hint that there is a desire for a return to visual pleasure and complexity in the context of feminist politics. There are also numerous excellent feminist filmmakers working in avant garde and radical styles with no intention of ever heading toward the box office. These three trends — Hollywood's encroachment on feminist politics, feminist subversion of popular styles, and the ongoing work outside the box office market — will surely give critics and filmgoers ample material for dinner party discussion.



A Question of Silence: surrealistic cinematography, intuitive feminism and "insane" humor

# German Director Defends Suicide Film



## Giarres

Directed by Reinhard von der Marwitz, West Germany.

By Jon-David Nalley

Ending amid hisses and boos, the New York Gay Film Festival 1985 showing of the German film Giarres provoked outrage and angry comments at its director, Reinhard von der Marwitz.

After each showing, von der Marwitz answered the why's of his film's production—why a movie depicting gay life ended with the death of the two main (and gay) characters at the hands of a straight man. Von der Marwitz explained to New York audiences that Giarres is about love and romanticism. Inspired by a 1981 incident in Sicily, von der Marwitz created a film about the confusion of two gay lovers in despair who wish to keep their love at its most perfect by ending it with their deaths at the hand of a third party.

As I sat down to talk with von der Marwitz, I wondered why the audience had made such a fuss . . . why they had hated the film so much. I wondered about someone who, with a piece of celluloid, could ignite such outrage. Although I had enjoyed the film, I could understand others' not doing so for a number of reasons—the unorthodox sequencing, the moral ambivalence toward suicide, etc. People were yelling however, and this I could not understand.



## Giarres

Von der Marwitz was not unprepared. His blasé, "shoulder-shrugging" attitude was one of resignation. It was obvious to him that many didn't like his film—some even hated it—but he felt the discussion provoked by the film could raise important questions regarding the "lesbian and gay community" and its relationship or marginality to the larger population.

The fact that the gay characters in Giarres decided upon their death/suicide apart from the concerns of straight society didn't quell the anger among New York audiences, a reaction von der Marwitz said was echoed in Ger-

many—with even eminent gay filmmaker Rosa von Praunheim hating the film.

Von der Marwitz had much to say about his film in relation to the German film industry, as well as the state of the German gay movement with relation to Bundesrepublik politics.

"There is a very strong American influence on the German film market," von der Marwitz mentioned. "There is a growing feeling among Germans that all films should look like American action movies; there is an aversion to European art films. More importantly, the German government, which finances film production,

has the attitude that it makes no sense to produce small low-budget films that don't appear on the market; the government is proposing that bigger, and fewer, American-type films be made." Von der Marwitz was amused by the parallel American response to European experimental films—feeling that for Americans, they were an exotic, relaxing and therapeutic contrast to American movies.

The director explained that such lobbying takes place within such "independent" institutions as the government-funded foundations which finance film production in the Bundesrepublik. He pointed to the examples of the Berlin Film Fund, the Hamburg Film Fund and others which, for all their independence, included such representatives of official institutions as bankers and cinema figures—thereby compromising their integrity. Von der Marwitz described the whole lobbying effort that went on in this process as "a whole game to get money." He warned that the proposed structure to make fewer American-type films, rather than many smaller low-budgets, wouldn't fare well for gay film.

Much influenced by the work of Karl Heinrich Ulrichs (1825-1895), who pioneered the gay rights struggle during the 1860's with his 1864 publications *Index* and *Inclusa*, von der Marwitz hasn't

found much support from Ulrich's descendants in the present German gay movement. Although the filmmaker felt that some dislike of Giarres stemmed from its format as a black and white movie with an unusual form of narration—going backward rather than forward in chronological order—the real anger is directed against the film's dealing with death and suicide. For, although the story of the suicide was itself not dramatized, von der Marwitz felt that subject rubbed the wrong way on people who were expecting another coming-out movie.

This expectation of gay audiences to gay films grated von der Marwitz, who felt that those innocuous coming-out movies were the stuff of heterosexual liberals. The director felt it more important to deal with other things "like love—which is an endless coming-out." Von der Marwitz added that film could provide a physical approach to such theoretical discussions as "What is sexuality and the conflict involved? Why do we have certain relationships and desires? That is what we should discuss now."

Giarres' director debated the current existence of a gay movement in Germany: "Movement? Everyone is acting singly or in small groups." He described what is presently termed the German gay movement—self-help groups, *Continued on page 16*

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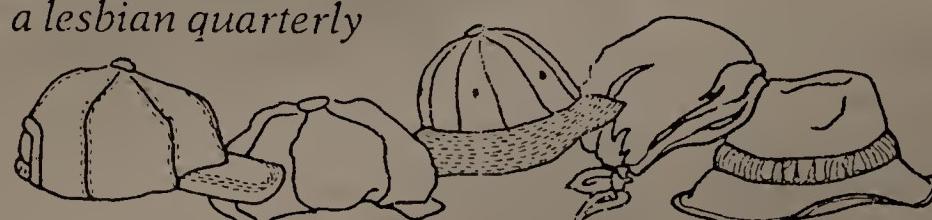
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# Revolutionaries and Romantics

## Tread Softly

Directed by Di Andrew, color, 27 mins., 1982, Australia.

## On Guard

Directed by Susan Lambert, color, 51 mins., 1984, Australia.

Lesbian characters are steadily gaining time in front of the camera — from soap operas to Hollywood to porn videos. Here are two short Australian films which don't simply use lesbians as incidental titillation for straight viewers, but actually attempt to accurately portray lesbian lives to lesbian audiences.

By Mara Math

The Australian film *On Guard*, directed by Susan Lambert, is a tautly-paced, lesbian-feminist thriller that drew cheers from the audience both times I saw it. The film tells the story of a successful sabotage effort by four lesbian-feminists directed against UTERO, a reproductive technologies facility that would eventually eliminate women from the reproductive process. The four saboteurs (saboteuses?) record their own documentary on the subject, to be delivered with their communiqué after the action — an intriguing idea in itself, and one that would bear further exploration.

The urgency of the plot is heightened when one of the four loses her diary, possibly incriminating all of them. (It wasn't clear to me until my second view-

ing that the scenes of a faceless man finding and photocopying the diary are Amelia's worst fantasies, and not some parallel part of the plot.)

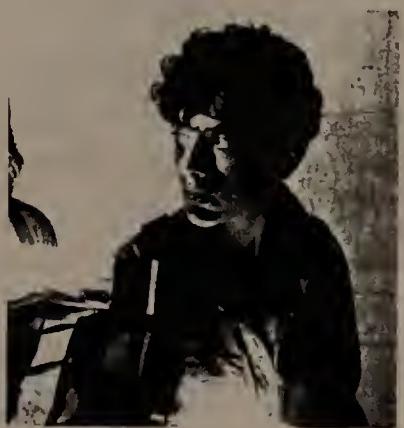
*On Guard* has the earmarks of a film that has either been overrated or one where the premise and context are so clear to the creators that they forget to communicate some of it to the audience. Seeing it twice may help other viewers catch on to the intricate sabotage plan and the quick Australian dialect.

These are refreshingly down-to-earth revolutionaries. They live in collective households, argue about the chores, complain about their jobs, and agonize over their relationships. *On Guard* offers humor, politics, and the most natural, credible lesbian relationship I've seen on screen.

The advertising blurb for the Australian film *Tread Softly* promised that it "affirmed lesbian lifestyles." I can only suppose the fact that the two lovers could be any two people is responsible for this promotion. These two women exist on an island, as far as we can see. They have no mutual friends, no community, no history, and damned little in common. Claire's

son is conveniently away for the brief time it takes this relationship to dissolve. Claire's work, which enables her to keep a rather luxurious home, is never explained — perhaps a legal secretary? The only sign that this is not identical to a heterosexual relationship is the slight hint that Claire must be closeted around her boss.

Natalie Bate is Angela, a beautiful young dancer, the Blithe



*On Guard*

Spirit whose role it is to bring Fun into stodgy, older, punctual Claire's life. Robyn Given gives an extraordinary performance as Claire, the maternalistic lover who insists on performing such reprehensible activities as making dinner and answering the phone.



*On Guard*

When this couple is Having Fun, romping in the leaves or cuddling in a collapsed tent — no, there is no overt anything anywhere — it's cute, but too self-consciously charming.

The film hits the mark occasionally — we feel a bit of the claustrophobia Claire induces in her lover, we're shocked when Angela kisses a male colleague — but all too often the film shudders under the weight of heavy-handed clichés. Angela does try to phone Claire to say she'll be late, but

when she doesn't reach her, she shrugs and literally skips — ugh — offscreen. The title comes from the turning point of the film, when the Blithe Spirit stands on a rock in the ocean and declaims Yeats in a whisper: "Tread softly when you tread on my dreams...." The creative camerawork cannot redeem this film from its triteness and ageist stereotyping. When the film is good, it's painfully accurate; when it's bad, it's painfully embarrassing.

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# Before Stonewall: A Proud 70-Year Heritage

*Before Stonewall: The Making of a Gay and Lesbian Community.* 87 minutes, 16 mm color. Executive Producer: John Scagliotti. Director: Greta Schiller. Co-Director: Robert Rosenberg. Editor: Bill Daughton. Archival Research Director: Andrea Weiss. Narrator: Rita Mae Brown.

By Patricia A. Gozenba

*Before Stonewall*, a feature-length documentary film tracing the social, political, and cultural development of the lesbian and gay community from the turn of the century to the Stonewall riots of June, 1969, presents us with a version of our roots. Having already received in March 1985 the Filmex Award for Best American Independent Feature Film in the Non-Fiction category, this film appears destined to be a winner. Like the Academy Award-winning *The Life and Times of Harvey Milk*, this inspirational film can make all of us enormously proud of our heritage.

Using archival footage and still photos from both our own and the mass media's portrayal of our community, as well as contemporary filmed recollections of the past, Greta Schiller presents an eclectic view of lesbian and gay

history interwoven with a larger cultural context.

The film is a *must-see* not because it actually comes up with any analysis that reflects a breakthrough in the thinking about our past, but rather, because it presents, in a slick, fast-paced, entertaining, and highly accessible fashion, the discoveries that lesbian and gay history projects like those in San Francisco, New York, Buffalo, D.C., and Boston have been coming up with during the past eight years or so. It further brings to light the work that pioneers like Jonathan Katz brought into print in *Gay American History* and the *Gay/Lesbian Almanac* and that Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon described in *Lesbian Woman*. To see much of that information presented so well is a joy.

Appropriately enough, the film opens with Ronald Reagan in a cross-dressing musical. Towards the conclusion of the film we are treated to hearing our venerable leader, forty years later, describe homosexuality in his inimitable faltering rhetoric, "I happen to subscribe to the belief that it is a tragic illness, a neurosis." In many ways Reagan's attitude



from *Before Stonewall*: cruising in the '50s

towards homosexuality accurately captures the divine U.S. schizophrenia about homosexuality: when you can make money off an unempowered minority and keep them in their place, fine, but as soon as those folks look organized, articulate, and determined, characterize them as deviant. *Before Stonewall* and President Reagan can make us all feel proud to be deviants.

Organized chronologically, the film begins searching for our roots at the turn of the century in what Harry Hays calls "the world of the

demi-monde,...the twilight world of artists." Not surprisingly, the center of that world then as now was San Francisco and New York; places where being different was tolerated. Our culture was not without its pain, though, for Doris Smith, who looks today like a proper motherly figure, reminds us that being a lesbian was "appropriate grounds for putting you in a mental hospital."

The Twenties ushered in a liberation of sorts, born in part with women's attaining the vote and in general with the post-war economic boom and new attitudes towards sex. This film does a particularly good job of portraying the connections in New York between the Black and lesbian and gay communities. The recollections of Mabel Hampton about her experiences in the Garden of Joy club with other women "in the life," like Ethel Waters, Bessie Smith, and Alberta Hunter, and Richard Nugent's stories about Gladys Bentley, an enormously popular Black piano player who always dressed in men's clothes and even went off to Atlantic City to marry her girlfriend, make clear the relationship between our communities. As Hampton said of

many of the clubs in Harlem, "the places were not gay but they were open," and in that open society gay men and lesbians achieved acceptance.

With the economic depression of the 1930s came a tightening of the acceptance of a more public presence of homosexuality. Plays like *The Captive* and *The Children's Hour* created a stir even in New York. By 1935, the Motion Picture Industry's Code banned all references to homosexuality, an apparent response to Oscar Wilde's *Salomé*, which was performed by a reputedly all-gay cast.

The message that German sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld brought to this country in the 1930s was an extremely optimistic one describing the advances of homosexual liberationists in Germany, but a few years later most of those emancipationists were in concentration camps. World War II did become, however, the major factor in this country for freeing lesbians and gay men from provincial constraints and for drawing them to locales where they could shape communities. Building in particular on the work of John d'Emilio's *Sexual Politics, Sexual Communities: The Making of a*

continued on next page

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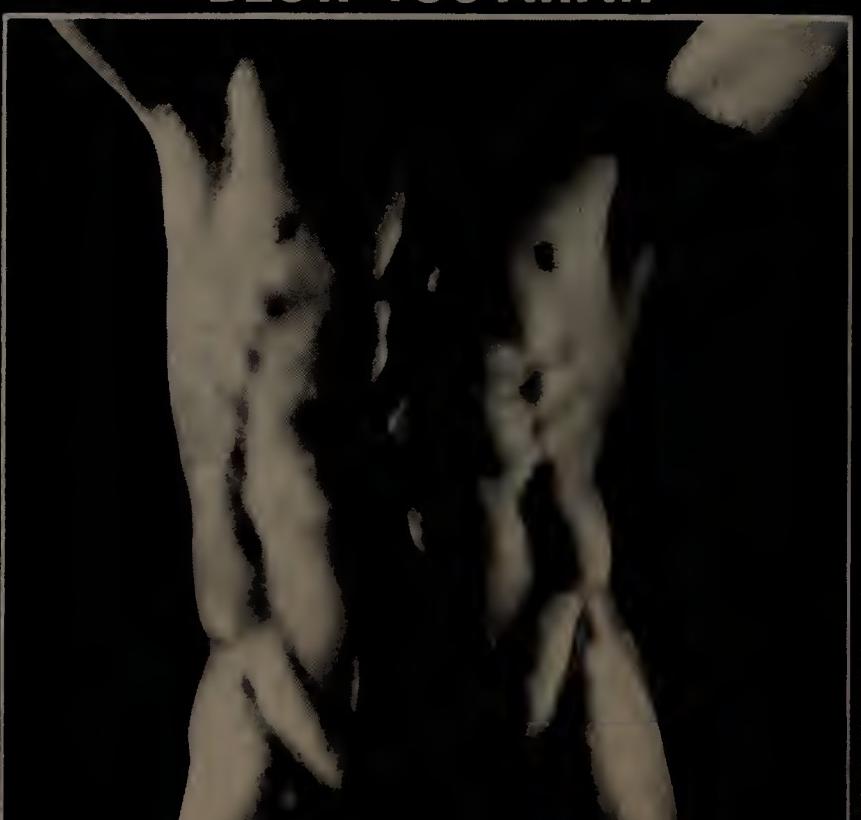


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continued from last page

*Homosexual Minority in the United States, 1940-1970* and Allan Berube's slide show, *Marching to a Different Drummer*, the film highlights in a very clear way the enormous impact of World War II on the emergence of the gay community in major U.S. cities.

The war brought men and women together in same-sex environments, and there our ancestors found each other. Bars catering to essentially gay and lesbian clientele opened in port cities. Women took over male occupations and had cultural permission to wear pants and cut their hair short. Even drag queens joined the service and the army put many of them in a travelling drag show to entertain the boys; the show attained such popularity that it was eventually made into a film. The clips in *Before Stonewall* are hilarious.

One of the most touching and funny stories in the film is told by a lesbian, Johnnie Phelps, who recounts having been told by Eisenhower to "ferret out the lesbians" in her battalion. Her response to Ike was, "If it will please the general, sir, I'd be glad to do it, but the first name on the list will be mine." At that moment Eisenhower's secretary, who was in the

room, said, "No, my name will be first on the list." After having been told that close to 97 percent of the women were lesbians, Eisenhower told Phelps to "forget the order."

At the conclusion of the war, the returning vets settled in the port cities to find companionship in the growing gay communities and to escape their families which would be critical of their lifestyles. The times were temporarily liberal, in large part because of the staggering moral dilemmas of the bomb and the concentration camps with which everyone was confronted at least at a subconscious level. A widespread questioning of morals took place and the Kinsey report made it clear that homosexuality and lesbianism were prevalent in our society.

A brief period of enlightened public discussion on issues of sexuality was followed by the McCarthy witchhunts, the trial over Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, and Eisenhower's Executive Order 10450, which barred homosexuals from federal employment. Our community rose to the challenges of those times: in the 1950s the Mattachine Society and the Daughters of Bilitis were founded; the American Civil Liberties

Union fought and won the censorship battle over *Howl*; and Frank Kameny began his fight against the government's restrictive employment practices for homosexuals. Publications like the *Mattachine Review*, *One*, and *The Ladder*, as well as thousands of novels on gay and lesbian themes, reified the culture and brought it to those not in the big cities. In *Before Stonewall* Barbara Grier, a former

culture.

Audre Lorde's recollection of being part of "the gay girls' version of the beatniks" in Greenwich Village in the '50s makes it apparent that the gay and lesbian culture survived despite the massive efforts of straight society to destroy it. As Lorde and Maua Adele Ajanaku point out, however, it was not a politically conscious subculture that dealt in any way with the issues of racism and anti-semitism.

Ironically, Lorde notes that it was the Black Power and Civil Rights Movements which ultimately taught the gay and lesbian movement to organize and about the necessity of dealing with race issues. White gay men and lesbians who were part of the Civil Rights Movement eventually gained the courage to fight homophobic discrimination while not letting go of the race issue.

In 1961 the run of Jose Sarria, the famous Black Cat Club performer in San Francisco, for city supervisor marked an era of increasing boldness in our community. Although Sarria did not win, he sparked public discussion. Sarria's bold, flamboyant courage was matched by the determination of people like Frank Kameny and

Barbara Gittings, who organized pickets at the White House and the State Department in the mid-1960s and firmly insisted on the position that homosexuality was not a mental illness.

The hippie movement, along with all the other liberation movements of the 1960s, built to the revolution led by the drag queens at Stonewall in June, 1969. While that riot marks the beginning of the most clearly identifiable gay and lesbian liberation movement of this century in this country, the film shows us how that moment was really the culmination of almost 70 years of organizing.

*Before Stonewall* is a treasure of which we can be very proud. The film is our history and it is presented eloquently and with humor; it is the kind of history lesson that could have turned us all into historians. The hour and a half running time flies by. Good directing, skilled editing, and very respectable research combine to make this a most compelling story of our very brave community.

*Before Stonewall* will be showing at the Nickelodeon May 24-May 31, and at the Orson Welles May 31-June 4.



from *Before Stonewall*: man or woman, what do you think?

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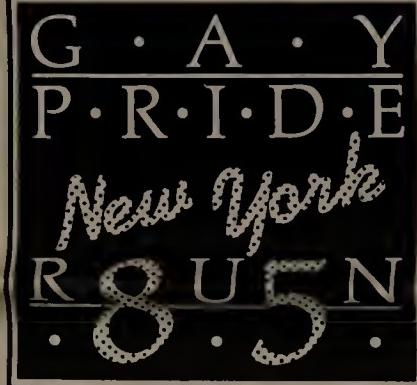
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**German Suicide Film**

continued from page 12

caucuses (gay doctors, gay social workers, etc.) — "which deal in relation to the outside world to show outrage . . . not a basic gay movement." He wondered whether the connection of the late sixties and through the seventies had really been a movement for radical social change or just a search to find others like ourselves.

Although von der Marwitz pointed to the climate of the eighties and the growing conservatism which he said was also taking place in Germany, he found the reaction to him was sometimes harsher from political progressives than conservatives. "A lot of Social Democrats and Die Grünen (the Green Party) hate this film. They feel *Giarres* doesn't reflect gay people in the way their agenda calls for. It always turns into a discussion of gays in relation to straight people." Marwitz felt that minority groups fulfill a specific role for political agendas and that homosexuals represented

sex to the left in the Bundesrepublik — "Whatever is anti-state or anti-government is good." Gay people are tolerated if they represent and fulfill their role. He found it irksome that so many gays have accepted that representation of themselves, and that they didn't look at *Giarres* as an artform, going directly to what it represented politically.

"This situation represses feelings, which are the very definition of freedom. If you break this role or new code of 'freedom,' then everyone is against you." His feeling about the situation in the Bundesrepublik was that political progressives were using homosexuals as a political weapon. "Ah. Those poor human beings with a bloody history, always persecuted. If they are not disturbing, they are human beings like we are." To von der Marwitz this means that if heterosexuals (the majority) give the freedom to the homosexual minority to stay alive, they can create another law on how they can stay alive.

On the issue of the death of the gay lovers in *Giarres*, the film's portrayal of death didn't fit into the German left's agenda — a group which usually views suicide as a statement of individual freedom. Von der Marwitz himself felt that most stories end with tragic conflict and that death could be very didactic. When connected with a minority group, however, the issue of death and suicide takes on a different meaning because the left feels that "they don't have the freedom to decide what freedom is."

Von der Marwitz reflected on the American opposition to his film stoically. "Sure, the people were shouting, but it was good

that there was a reaction." In spite of what he viewed as a "gay inner-family quarrel, the film deals a lot with feelings in a gay 'community' that has seen AIDS become a fence between everything, and where all moral discussions become directed at promiscuity. There is so much uncertainty in German gay magazines; everything ends up with AIDS. I see the same here — there is much hysteria. Meetings are always reactions rather than initiative."

I had to agree. Because of AIDS, the resurgent right and other threats, many of us would like to see only "positive" films with gay male characters living in a never-never land. How good could that possibly be for us as a community?

The political gay community has become too reactive — always reacting to the epidemic, the Moral Majority, the Reagan administration, anti-lesbian/gay violence — never exploring ourselves, taking the initiative as to what we are doing and where we are going. Maybe *Giarres* is hitting them where they've never been hit before and they don't know how to deal with it. For the majority of gay men who are not political, it seems that they want continual gay versions of *Love Story* in which gay characters conform to traditional and sexist gender roles.

It seems we've fallen into a well-worn path that isn't too comfortable but it is less threatening than the unknown. Risks are threatening in a time of economic, political, spiritual and environmental uncertainty, but they have to be taken if we are to grow and survive — not only as gay men and lesbians but as human beings.

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Bed + Cont Bkfst for Lesbians and Gay Men in a country village house 2 hrs fr Bos. Yr-round. Nr lakes, hikes, skiing. Dave + Mike (802)348-7840.

### BED & BREAKFAST IN N.Y.

Enjoy a decadent weekend in a charming, lesbian owned, N.Y. brownstone — only 1 subway stop from Manhattan. Be pampered by having breakfast served in bed, and sipping a complimentary bottle of champagne on arrival. For more information, call (718)625-2653, THE RADCLIFFE HALL. (13/36)

### PROVINCETOWN

New 2-bedroom condo, 2 bathrooms, beach access, decks all around, available until Labor Day \$800/wk. (617) 825-5239. (Frank) (46)

### SUMMER RENTALS

#### PROVINCETOWN COTTAGE

2 bdrm sleeps 4 liv-klt combo  
2 min to private beach  
avail May-Sept July + Aug \$400 wk  
Tel eve (617) 373-1955 Carole (46)

#### PROVINCETOWN WATERFRONT APARTMENTS

Furn. apts. in quiet West End — ideal for lovers — by week, month, now through June and after Labor Day. Telephone: (617) 487-2771 or 262-7396 rates: from \$360/wk w/discounts. Ref. required. (47)

### ORGANIZATIONS

#### HETEROSEXISM, RACISM

Sexism, anti-Semitism, multicultural issues. Workshops by national consultants for your organization (municipal, professional, political, educational) or business. Contact Equity Institute in Amherst, MA at (413)256-6902. Co-directors Carole Langan Johnson, J.D., and Joan Lester, Ed.D. (?)

#### N AMER MAN/BOY LOVE ASSOC

A support group for intergenerational relationships. For more information send \$1 to: NAMBLA-GCNAD, PO Box 174, New York, NY 10018. (v. 13, no. 22)

#### SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS

Gay is OK! SDA Kinship International, Inc., since 1976, is a support group of several hundred gay/lesbian Adventists, present and former, in local chapters nationwide. Ask for brochure. Box 1233-L, Los Angeles, CA 90078. 213-876-2076. (49)

### HAD ENOUGH religious homophobia?

#### WE ARE

Gay And Lesbian Atheists  
Write to GALA for information and a free copy of the *GALA REVIEW*, P.O. Box 14142, San Francisco, CA 94114

#### "JOHNNY DIED TODAY..."

14 year old Joey will blow out his brains, Eddie will overdose & David will slash his wrists in the days to come. All because you're too scared to protect them. SASE for info, \$2 stamps 64 page newsletter. \$20 subsc/mbrshp. "REALITY INC.", PO Box 73, Paramus, NJ 07653.

#### D.O.B.

Suppt orgnzn for lesbians, 1151 Mass Ave, Camb, Old Bap Chr. Raps every Tues, Thurs 8pm. Special raps for 35+; parents; yng wrmn; baby brmr; singles; coming-out; Issues forum. All 8pm. Monthl events, outing club, library. Info: 661-3633. All women invited to participate.

#### LESBIANS

Are you Lesbian, Bisexual or unsure? Looking for a group to go to? Come join us at BAGLY.

Call Tony, 497-8282. (13/32)

#### GAY LESBIAN AND JEWISH?

Am Tikkva welcomes you. Activities include religious observances, discussions, potluck dinners, folk dancing, etc. For events, check GCN Calendar. Call (617) 782-8894 or write PO Box 11, Camb, MA 02238.

#### \$\$HORT \$\$STORY

Mary had a little store. Louise had one as well. They each took out a classified, And now their coffers swell. Try a GCN Classified. Our Ads get results!!!

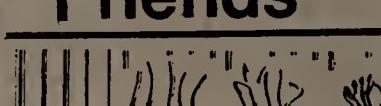
**YOU HATED OUR ADS... WAIT TILL YOU READ OUR MAGAZINE.**

**MANSCAPE.**  
**THE MAGAZINE THAT'S NOT AFRAID TO CONFRONT GAY SEX.**

**SAMPLE COPY \$3**

**Manscape**  
**P.O. Box 1314,**  
**Tearneck, NJ 07666.**

### Prisoners Seeking Friends



Those interested in establishing a network of confined lesbian and gay prisoners with progressive politics, I would like to hear from you. Anyone can write (inside or out). If the outside gay community can't help us, we'll have to help ourselves. Herbert Darrell Hay, 263672, PO Box 38 Goree Unit, Huntsville TX 77344.



Leo, would like to have both gay males and females to write to, esp. in the New England states where I hope to go when I get out. I prefer older men, country music, folk dancing, disco, photography. I'm 100 percent disabled. I'm kind and understanding and planning to become a counselor. Mike HARDIN, 363300, Ellis II (E2-311), Huntsville TX 77343.

Thanks for sending GCN and running an ad for me. If you have a chance I'd also like to hear from the other half of our community, some lesbian or bi-women. I think it's important that all gay people of either sex communicate and share in our common interests and I'd love to hear from any women that would care to write. Thank you. Tim WALTHALL, B95732, Box 600, Tracy CA 95376.

Black, Jamaican gay male interested in responding with individuals who are honest and have a sense of humor. I'm a writer, dancer, and singer. DeLanco KCAY, 84A2572, 135 State St, Auburn NY 13024.

I'm 24, nice looking, love sex, sports, dancing, but seeking a one on one relationship. Please send one of your Jailhouse Lawyers Manuals. Thanks! Perry BRADSHAW, PO Box 137, Tillery NC 27887.

Blond and blue, olive skin, clean cut, versatile, well built, seeks sincere good looking, well built person for the "quality" in life. Love to travel, music. Photo a must. Aggressives only please. Michael STOTTS, 17829-034, Bastrop TX 78602.

As a result of getting beat up badly I've become "incontinent" (have no control over urinary/evacuation system and need to wear adult "diapers", which cost much money and they won't supply them here). Does anybody know anything or anybody that could be helpful in this situation? I'm a young member of NAMBLA who has sex with both boys and men. William P. LACEY, 206637, Box A, Oakdale IA 52319.

**HELP!!! BOOKS!!!**  
Please consider sending or dropping by GCN (167 Tremont, Boston 02111; on the Common) your already read gay books (fiction or nonfiction). Prisoners really do get a lot out of them and we'll be glad to send them in. Thanks. (We won't refuse donations for postage; but will be glad to get just books!).

Attention Please. Young black gay age 23 seeking correspondence with someone who's realistic, loveable, single, looking for a one on one relationship; dark brown bedroom eyes. Coming up for parole and have to relocate to another state (than

# CALENDAR

**June 1  
to  
June 16**

**1 saturday**

Salem — Boston Gay Men's Chorus. Old Town Hall. 7PM social hour, 8PM concert. \$7. Reservations: 639-1398.

Cambridge — "Difference: On Representation and Sexuality," a photography and video exhibit. MIT Reference Gallery, List Visual Arts Center, 20 Ames St. Info: 253-4400.

Boston — The New Ehrlich Theatre presents "Slag" by David Hare. 539 Tremont St., Boston Center for the Arts. 8PM Wed.-Sat. & Sun. afternoons until June 29. \$6. Info: 482-6316.

**2 sunday**

Cambridge — Women's Softball just-for-fun. Magazine Field, on Memorial Drive. 4-6PM. \$1 donation. (Every Sunday) Info: D.O.B., 661-3633.

**3 monday**

Boston — Black Rose Radio AIDS politics program with John Beldekas and Cindy Paton. 5PM. WMBR 88.1 FM. (Also 6/10) Info: 497-0647.

**4 tuesday**

Cambridge — New coming out support group for women. Women's Center, 46 Pleasant St. 7:30PM-9:30PM. Info: 354-8807.

Boston — Scott Madsen, author of *Peak Condition*, book-signing party. Glad Day Bookshop, 43 Winter St., 2nd floor, Downtown Crossing. Info: 542-0144.

Cambridge — Crisis Intervention presentation by the Samaritans. Daughters of Bilitis, 1151 Mass. Ave., Old Cambridge Baptist Church. 8PM. \$1. All women welcome. Info: 661-3633.

Boston — StreetSAFE, the Fenway's community crime prevention program, training for volunteers. 236 Huntington Ave. 7-10PM. Info: 262-0060.

Boston — Studio Red Top "Jazz Women in Concert." New England Life Hall, 225 Clarendon St. 8PM. \$6-10. Info: 266-7262.

Boston — Claudia Wellington & David Sparr, jazz performers. Club Cafe, 209 Columbus Ave., corner of Berkeley & Columbus. 9PM-12:30AM. \$5. Info: 536-0966.

Cambridge — Nicaraguan brigades informational meeting. CASA, 1151 Mass Ave. 7PM. Info: 492-8699.



Scott Madsen, June 4

**5 wednesday**

Boston — AIDS Update, presented by AIDS Action Committee. Morville House, 100 Norway St. (at Edgerly Rd.), near Aud. T stop. 7-9PM. Info: 536-7733.

Cambridge — GCN benefit film showing: *Drifting* and *Each Other*. Orson Welles Cinema, 1001 Mass Ave. 8 & 9:45PM. \$7 for both films. \$5 for one (more if/less if). Info: 868-3600.

Dorchester — Nicaraguan brigades informational meeting. 12 Adanac Ter., nr. Ashmont Sta. 7PM. Info: 492-8699.

**6 thursday**

Boston — *Gay Community News* always needs help on production night when articles are proofread and pasted up. If you've done proofreading or layout and would like to volunteer, stop by 167 Tremont St. 5th Floor (5-8pm for proofing, 7:30-11pm for layout). Come help out GCN and read tomorrow's news today.



Sarah Schulman, June 6

Cambridge — Sarah Schulman, author of *The Sophie Horowitz Story*, reads from her work. New Words, 186 Hampshire St. 7:30PM. Info: 876-5310.

Boston — Eric Rofes and Meryl Friedman, gay teachers and the Moral Majority. "People Are Talking," Channel 4 TV. 12:30-1:30PM.

Cambridge — "Living Together, Part 2," a discussion with Daughters of Bilitis. 1151 Mass. Ave., Old Cambridge Baptist Church. All women welcome. 8PM. \$1. Info: 661-3633.

Cambridge — Daughters of Bilitis running club for lesbians. 6:30PM. (Every Thursday & Sundays at 10AM) Info: Jean, 277-8150.

**7 friday**

Boston — GCN VOLUNTEER NIGHT!!! Come help send out the paper to our subscribers. Refreshments and good times. Come anytime after 6PM to 167 Tremont Street, 5th Floor (near Boylston and Park Street "T" stops). If the door is locked, buzz us on the GCN intercom located outside the front door.

Boston — Mobius Performing Group intermedia performances including "Incorrect Forms of Love." 354 Congress St. 8PM. (Also Saturday) \$6, \$4 for students. Info: 542-7416.

**8 saturday**

Boston — BAGLY's 5th Annual Prom for lesbian & gay youth (age 22 and under). Appalachian Mt. Club, 8 Joy St., Beacon Hill. 8PM. Dress to impress. Info: 497-8282.

Boston — Dance presented by "A Colored Girls Production." Boston YWCA. 9PM. \$3, proceeds to benefit women going to Kenya. All women and their friends welcome.

Cambridge — Lesbian Singles meeting. Daughters of Bilitis, 1151 Mass Ave., Old Cambridge Baptist Church. 8PM. \$1. Info: 661-3633.

Cambridge — "Batacada Belles," a women's percussion marching band rehearsal for Gay & Lesbian Pride. Magazine Beach. 10:30AM. No experience necessary. \$1 donation. Info: 776-6699.

Brighton — Boston NOW picket of Catholic Archbishop headquarters in support of reproductive rights. 10:30-11:30AM. Rally at Rodger's Park, noon. Info: 661-6015.

Cambridge — "Haiti: Pearl or Prison of the Antilles?" sponsored by Amnesty International. Old Cambridge Baptist Church, Harvard Square. 7PM. \$3. Info: 547-9295.

**9 sunday**

Boston — Fundraising Brunch for Gay & Lesbian Counseling Services. Downtown Cafe. Seatings at 11:30AM & 1:30PM. \$25. Info: Clay, 542-5188.

Cambridge — Opening Reception for "Minatures of Genady & Tatjana Mamanova." Rising Phoenix Gallery, 244 Columbia St., Central Sq. 1-4PM. Exhibit open through June. Info: 492-7522.

New Hampshire — All-day hike up Sandwich Mt. with Chiltern Mt. Club. Medium difficult. Info: Michael, 522-9194.

**10 monday**

Boston — "Silent Pioneers," a portrait of eight gay and lesbian elders. Channel 2, WGBH-TV. 10:30PM.

**11 tuesday**

Cambridge — Coming-Out Rap. Daughters of Bilitis, 1151 Mass. Ave., Old Cambridge Baptist Church. 8PM. \$1. All women welcome. Info: 661-3633.

**13 thursday**

Boston — "The AIDS Show," spicey agit-prop revue from California, to benefit AIDS Action Committee. Little Theater, 261 Tremont St. 8PM. Champagne Opening Night, \$25. Info: 536-7733.

**14 friday**

Boston — Am Tikva Erev Pride Liberation Seder. Hill House, Joy St., Beacon Hill. 8PM. Info: 782-8894.

Cambridge — Women's Coffeehouse: a celebration of women's music in honor of Lesbian Pride. Daughters of Bilitis, 1151 Mass. Ave., Old Cambridge Baptist Church. 8-11PM. \$1. Info: 661-3633.

Boston — British gay punk band The Smiths. The Opera House, 539 Washington St. \$14-15. Info: 426-3888.

Boston — "The AIDS Show." \$12.50. See 13th for details.

**15 saturday**

Boston — Gay and Lesbian Pride! Take off from Copley Square at noon. Info: 889-4777 or 236-1641.

Cambridge — Second Annual Gay Rites program, sponsored by the Greater Boston Lesbian & Gay Interfaith Coalition. Old Cambridge Baptist Church, 1151 Mass. Ave. Childcare available. ASL interpreted. 7:30PM. Info: 497-8293.

Boston — "The AIDS Show." \$12.50. See 13th for details.

Cambridge — Amethyst Women Dance for Pride. 11 Garden St., First Congregational Church. 9PM. \$4 more if/less if. Childcare available, wheelchair accessible. Alcohol- & drug-free space.

Boston — Lesbian and Gay Pride Parade cablecast. BNN TV, Channel A3. 6-8PM. Show will be repeated on Thursday, June 27, from 6-8PM.

**16 sunday**

Waltham — Beginners' Canoe Outing for women. 10AM. \$10. Sponsored by Wild Women of Daughters of Bilitis. Info: Mimi, 924-1543.

Boston — Boston Gay Men's Chorus Gay Pride concert, "Come On, Get Happy." Jordan Hall, N.E. Conservatory. 8PM. \$10, 8 & 6. Sign language interpreted. Info: 536-2412.

## Notes

### australian women's work

For Love or Money, a women-made documentary about the history of women and work in Australia, features crisp editing, an unobtrusive yet interesting soundtrack, and creative use of short narrative reenactments, still shots, old and recent clips from film and TV. The collage effect eventually wears thin — 109 minutes is a long time not to settle into anything, especially when the subject matter is two hundred years of history in a somewhat unknown culture, as it will be for U.S. audiences. My tendency was to flesh out the film's sketchiness by drawing parallels with U.S. history, a compare-and-contrast which was interesting, if ethnocentric. Clips of media propaganda designed to get women out of the house during war-time and back into the house afterwards had a very familiar ring to them. The various Red Scares and depressions, and the omnipresent sexual violence toward working-poor women and genocidal treatment of aboriginal people, also felt "just like home."

Though more academic than activist in tone, the film is suffused with a perspective on women, work, and social change which tries to deal simultaneously with issues of sex, class, and race. Ultimately, the filmmakers' attempt to tie together the parallel, intertwined yet disparate evolutions of white working women, white middle-class women and poor aboriginal women falls short, even as the narration keeps trying to force the issue by the use of "we" for all women. Still, this film is an informative look at Australian women and a step forward for socialist-feminist theory and feminist film.

— Pam Mitchell

### dykes' shorts

On Saturday, May 25, the Boston Film and Video Foundation presented nine short films by lesbian filmmaker Barbara Hammer. Hammer herself was there to introduce the films and to lead a discussion afterwards. The first half, four of her earlier works, concentrated more on the body and on the persona. *Menses*, the first film, seems part comic, part celebratory, with young women buying cartsful of sanitary products and, naked, bleeding on a hillside. *Double Strength*, according to Hammer, is about the stages in many lesbian relationships. I was glad for the explanation, for the film itself was a bit incomprehensible. *Synch Touch*, a study of "lesbian aesthetics," was also slightly hard to grasp but thought-provoking and fun to watch — giant crayons coloring in the film and very tactile close-ups of women's skin. *Our Trip*, about a women's backpacking trip to Peru, features cut-outs, coloring in of the film, and words printed on the film which give it a lively scrapbook feel.

In the second half of the program, Hammer moved away from the body to the outdoors. *Arequipa*, a silent series of images from southern Peru, is beautiful, evocative and perhaps a trifle too long. *Pools* shows an exquisite mosaic of pools. The painting-in process seems a bit jarring when it occurs here. *Pond and Waterfall* is shot from the point of view of an amphibious creature: we see both below and above the water surface. It's a very lovely work — the coloring-in process works splendidly here — but again, I felt, too long. At the end of this slow-moving, silent journey, I felt quite waterlogged.

Hammer's films are interesting and her engaging discussions of them made for a provocative evening.

— Sally Jordan

Calendar compiled by Miranda Kolbe

**GAY COMMUNITY NEWS**

# *Gay Community News*

and  
Orson Welles Cinema  
present



<b>OPENING-NIGHT PROCEEDS BENEFIT GCN!</b>			
<b>WED/THURS</b>	<b>DRIFTING EACH OTHER</b>	(Boston Premiere)	4:30, 8:00 2:45, 6:00, 9:45
June 5, 6			
<b>FRI/SAT</b>	<b>BLACK LIZARD CORRUPT</b>		1:00, 4:30, 8:00 (Boston Premiere) 2:45, 6:15, 9:45
June 7, 8			
<b>SUN/MON/TUE</b>	<b>SCRUBBERS SCUM</b>		1:15, 4:35, 8:00 (Boston Premiere) 2:55, 6:15, 9:45
June 9, 10, 11			
<b>WED/THURS</b>	<b>ANOTHER COUNTRY PRIVATE'S ON PARADE</b>		1:15, 4:35, 8:00 2:55, 6:15, 9:45
June 12, 13			
<b>FRI/SAT</b>	<b>BURGER QUEENS OF BERLIN TAXI ZUM KLO</b>	(Boston Premiere)	1:15, 4:35, 8:00 2:55, 6:15, 9:45
June 14, 15			
<b>SUN/MON/TUE</b>	<b>ABUSE CHOOSING CHILDREN</b>	(Boston Premiere)	complete shows 2:30, 5:00, 7:30, 9:55
June 16, 17, 18			
<b>WED/THURS</b>	<b>THE CLINIC TRASH</b>		1:00, 4:25, 7:55 2:40, 6:05, 9:40
June 19, 20			
<b>FRI/SAT</b>	<b>SALO: 120 Days of Sodom LOADS</b>		complete shows (Boston Premiere) 3:00, 6:00, 9:00
June 21, 22			
<b>SUN/MON/TUE</b>	<b>MAEDCHEN IN UNIFORM THE WOMEN</b>		3:50, 7:55 1:30, 5:30, 9:35
June 23, 24, 25			
<b>WED/THURS</b>	<b>TIMES OF HARVEY MILK BURROUGHS</b>		1:00, 5:00, 8:00 3:30, 6:30, 9:40
June 26, 27			

## The New England Gay and Lesbian Film Festival

Orson Welles Cinema 1001 Massachusetts Avenue Cambridge 868-3600

June 5 8:00 & 9:45 shows only  
New England premiere to benefit Gay Community News.  
Tickets: \$7 for both times  
\$5 second show only (Please call if less if) available at the door.